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# A Chinese conception of "management" : an interpretive approach (Singapore).

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A CHINESE CONCEPTION OF "MANAGEMENT"  
-AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH (SINGAPORE)

A Dissertation Presented

By

SIEW KIM LEE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September

1987

Education

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A CHINESE CONCEPTION OF "MANAGEMENT"

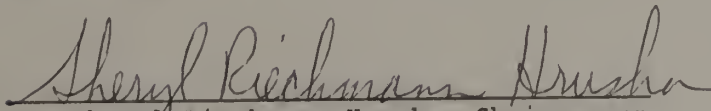
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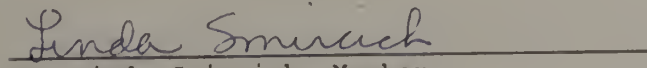
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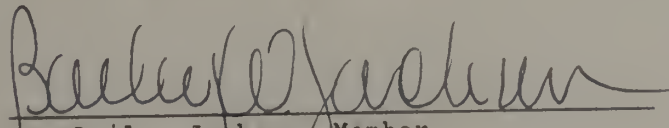
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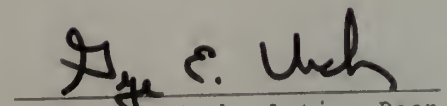
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## DEDICATION

### TO MY PARENTS

for their endless love, support, confidence, endurance  
and faith. Without them, without me.

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I would like to express my appreciation to people who have helped me in this project in different ways. First of all, my special thanks to Sheryl Riechmann Hruska, for her warmth, care, guidance, understanding, love, and both intellectual and emotional support. There is no other person who could be as wonderful as she is to be my chairperson. Thanks to Linda Smircich, who has been very intellectually stimulating both in and outside of this project, and has shared her warmth and friendship in her own way. Thanks also to Bailey Jackson for his unique perspective and clarification on the project. Special thanks also goes to Paul Hsu from the National University of Singapore for his resourceful and helpful support in the research field work. His expertise in Chinese management has provided invaluable guidance in the project.

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A B S T R A C T

A CHINESE CONCEPTION OF "MANAGEMENT"  
AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH (SINGAPORE)

SEPTEMBER, 1987

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To a large extent, management is perceived as a Western notion and is based on Western assumptions and norms. Most of our understanding of management came from the American experience. The problem lies in the assumption by these writers and researchers that what they think is true in the West, it is true for all cultures. This is a problem in cross-cultural management theory and practice.

This study was an attempt to challenge the imperialism in cross-cultural management. It attempted to voice the Singaporean Chinese managers' conception of Chinese management through a Singaporean Chinese researcher using an interpretive approach.

The specific purposes were to (1) discover Chinese managers' perception and definition of management; and (2) describe the way they manage.

This study followed an interpretive paradigm of research and analysis which allows representation of the perspective of the participants. It aimed to reveal and reflect the world as it is. Metaphor was used as a means to understand how Chinese managers in Singapore perceived Chinese management and how they manage. Six interviewees from Singapore local Chinese organizations were selected for the study. Indepth interview was used as the research method.

The research findings were presented through six stories and five scenes. Six stories (Chapter Four) were presented how they felt about Chinese management, their organizations and their managerial work. The five scenes (Chapter Five) were the interpretation and analysis of the "stories". Scene 1 focused on the Chinese managers' perception of the characteristics of Chinese management. Scene 2 contrasted the differences between Western management and Chinese management. Scene 3 highlighted the dilemma of the old and young generations and the dilemma in integrating Western and Chinese management. Scene 4 presented four metaphors

and a meta-metaphor that capture the conceptions of Chinese management. Scene 5 presented five metaphors that describe the work of Chinese managers.

The research findings were discussed in relation to the literature. Implications for Singaporean Chinese managers, management educators, organizational theorists, cross-cultural studies and future research were presented.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

This dissertation studies the Chinese conception of "management" in the context of Singapore. It is an attempt to understand the Chinese conception of "management" from the Chinese managers' point of view. It is hoped that through a basic understanding of the Chinese conception of "management", a new realm of organization concepts, theories, technologies and strategies could be discovered and developed for Chinese organizations in Asian countries.

Adler (1986) has pinpointed the problem in cross-cultural management.

"Until recently, most of our understandings of management came from the American experience: Americans and American-trained researchers observed the behavior of people in United States-based organizations. Based on their observations and research, they developed models and theories to explain the behavior. The problem was in their assumption: they implicitly assumed that what was 'true' for Americans working in

the United States was also true for people from other countries. Both researchers and managers tended to assume that work behavior was universal" (Adler, 1986:vii)

To a very large extent, "management" is perceived as a Western notion and is based on Western assumptions and norms. The vast majority of organizational behavioral research and the main theoretical models have come from highly individualistic Western societies. "Management" is usually taken for granted as being that which is defined in the Western textbooks:

"Management is the process of setting objectives and coordinating the efforts of personnel in order to attain them. Note that by its very definition, management involves getting things done through other people. The manager must be a planner, communicator, coordinator, leader, and controller; and most of all the manager must be a facilitator. He or she must smooth the way for subordinate performance (Hodgetts, 1985:4).

"Management determines the effectiveness and efficiency of organized activities" (Greene, Adam and Ebert, 1985:9).

Recently, due to Japanese success in the world economy, thoughts inevitably have turned to an explanation for such success. (Cooper, 1972; Fox, 1977; Hatvany, 1981; Lincoln & Olson, 1981; Marsh, 1981, Marsh & Mannari, 1976, 1981; Marsland & Beer, 1983; McMillan, 1980; Miller, 1982; Pascale, 1978; Pascale & Athos, 1981). Many credits have been given to Japanese

management. The study of Japanese management triggers a debate on whether the predominant theories about organizational behavior from the West can be fit into that of the East, or whether Japanese management is so different from American management. Variations across cultures and their impact on organizations becomes the focus of attention in cross-cultural management. Many theorists and researchers have slowly realized that different cultures manage differently. There are "discrepancies" in the concept of management in different cultures, and sometimes within a culture. However, the discrepancies have long been ignored. Today, with the increasing importance of international trade and business, and world technological advancements, cross-cultural blindness and ignorance can no longer be tolerated. Researchers and theorists can no longer assume as they once did that there is one best way to manage.

The literature on Japanese management is American biased (Schein, 1981). The questions which have been asked regarding Japanese management are pragmatic and utilitarian in their orientation and reflect a "Western", primarily American perspective. Similar to the literature of Japanese management, in the

literature of Chinese organization and management, many studies have been written by Western writers and are based on Western theoretical notions and Western concerns (Eg. Deyo, 1978; Evans & Sculli, 1981; Laaksonen, 1977; Lindsay & Dempsey, 1983; Nevis, 1983; Pye, 1983; Shenker, 1984; Warrington, 1983). The concept of "management" is almost always defined or taken for granted on the basis of Western assumptions and norms. Resting heavily on a Maslow-type view of the individual, the literature of Western organizational theory is overwhelmingly giving of advice on how self-esteem may be protected and enhanced and how self-actualization may be achieved during the pursuit of organizational productivity.

Said (1985) has critically questioned and examined what he called "Orientalism", which refers to "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience". He questioned the problems of "who writes or studies, in what institutional or discursive settings, for what audience, and with what ends in mind". Similar issues have been raised by the experiences of women and black studies: "the concern is the un- or mis-represented human groups to speak for and represent themselves in



domains defined, politically and intellectually, as normally excluding them, usurping their signifying and representing functions, overriding their historical reality" (Said, 1985:91).

Based on Said's concept of "Orientalism", the study of cross-cultural management triggers a critical question. That is: who defines whose experience on what bases with what ends? This question unfolds the deep underlying basis of knowledge creation, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of human understanding of their "world" and "reality". In this sense, the literature of cross-cultural management is not a "fact" of cultural differences, but a "phenomena" revealed in a political process of knowledge creation and dissemination. It involves the issue of "representation", which has been a concern in the field of social and cultural anthropology, particularly the writing developed in the West to represent non-Western cultures.

A small portion of Asian writers, have attempted to clarify and explain cross-cultural differences in Chinese managerial practice (eg. Oh, 1976; Casey, 1978, Chang, 1985, Lee, 1981; Tung, 1981). However, they were often trapped in their own epistemology, attempting to

explain Chinese behaviors using Western theoretical notions, and were unable to transcend the dominant mode of Western organizational theory. It is a dilemma for Chinese and Asian writers - how to capture fully Chinese perceptions and meaning while communicating this to those in the West where the language and prevailing notions do not allow full appreciation of the holistic nature of Asian perspectives. To some extent, it is the dilemma of this study. The problem of cross-cultural management is not only an issue of different cultural lenses, it is also an issue of the selected research mode of inquiry.

This study is an effort to challenge the imperialism in cross-cultural management. It attempts to voice the Singaporean Chinese managers conception of Chinese management through a Singaporean Chinese researcher using an interpretive approach which allows representation of the perspectives of the participants.

### Background To The Problem

The research was conducted in Singapore. Singapore was selected for two reasons: 1. It is my country. I am more able to empathize with the language and symbols used by the interviewees, and more able to understand



their systems of symbolizing experience. 2. I am concerned about the social progress in the country. I hope that my study will contribute to the development of Chinese management, and will enhance our consciousness in balancing between "modern" and "traditional" ways, which is a concern shared by many people in the country.

The Republic of Singapore is a city state with a population of only around 2.5 million, consisting of Singapore Island and some fifty-four islets with a total area of 618 square kilometres. Chinese, Malays and Indians are the three main ethnic groups, which together account for 97.9 per cent of the total population. The Chinese, constitute 75-76 per cent of the total population. Malays, 14-15 per cent; Indians, 8-9 per cent; and 2 per cent others. Located at the southern tip of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore occupies a pivotal position in Southeast Asia - being at the junction of important sea, air, and trade routes between the West and the Far East, and between East, Southeast and South Asia and Australia. It is this excellent geographic location coupled with the enterprising people, attracted to the island since it was founded in 1819 as a British trading post, that has

resulted in the transformation of the island from obscurity to international prominence.

The British colonization ended at World War II with the British defeat at the hands of the Japanese. In nearly four years of Japanese Occupation, the notion of British invincibility was broken. In the fifties, there was a struggle for self-governance and political independence in the small island. Singapore, after a long period of struggle, eventually attained self-government in 1959, and became an independent nation in August 1965.

The present Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in 1957, had expressed that an independent Singapore would be a "political joke" in the context of South Asian politics . This comment was obviously made with thorough awareness of Singapore's limitations and potentialities. When Singapore became independent, it was referred to as 'a reluctant nation'. Singapore lacked the ingredients for nationhood - homogeneous population, common language, culture, religion and a shared history. Economically, apart from its geographic location and natural harbor, Singapore has no natural resource. Yet, it is now considered a newly

industrialized nation and is referred to as one of the four "little dragons" in Asia (together with Taiwan , South Korea and Hong Kong). Singapore is now one of the major financial and communications centers in Asia (Lee, 1984), and is fast becoming the busiest port in the world.

Like the Japanese, the "crisis" mentality and a "strong sense of survival" have forced the Singapore Government and people to move relentlessly forward and upward.

"A clean, honest, efficient and far-sighted government; a pragmatic, hard-working and thinking people; and a socio-economic system which allows people to exercise their initiative and reward diligence and performance, have made Singapore survive" (Ow, 1984:337).

Singaporeans are now worried about their future. Being an open economy, Singaporeans cannot be insulated from the effects of changes in the economic conditions of the industrialized nations, neither do they have any control over externalities - protectionism, international debt problems, high interest rates and energy crises.

"One of the dilemmas faced in Singapore is, in the course of modernization, whether Singapore can, on the one hand, import technology and personnel from the West; and, on the other hand, retain the so-called "Asian values" or traditional values. Like other developing countries, the process of modernization and

industrialization brings with it not only new technology and innovations but also new values and norms from the West, which inevitably affect the attitudes and behavior of the people and their indigenous culture" (Chen, 1984:319).

There is a strong desire to find a proper balance between acquisition of knowledge needed for the modern economy on the one hand, and character development, inculcation of moral values and loyalty to the country on the other hand. Many worry that Singaporeans of future generations will lose much of their own cultural heritage, traditional values and ethnic characteristics. Singapore may become a de-culturized society (Cheng, 1985).

The Chinese in Singapore are largely the descendants of early migrants from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong in South-Eastern China. The Chinese success in business in Singapore as well as in other Southeast Asian countries is well known. Since the early days when Singapore acquired a reputation of commercial importance, the Chinese have been the most important ethnic group both in terms of numbers and involvement in commercial activities.

In a colonial laissez-faire economy based on trade, the Chinese realized that the effective way for upward mobility lay through petty trade. This accounts

in part for the strong desire of the Chinese to be their own masters in business. The easy entry of petty trade provides the individual Chinese entrepreneur a chance to exercise his talent. It is through petty trade that skills were developed and more capital was accumulated. This paved the way for higher forms of business enterprise.

Since 1965, Singapore has achieved rapid economic growth through industrialization. This process of evolution has resulted in a major change in its economic structure, but small industries (establishments employing between 10-100 workers) still comprise about 86% of the total number of industrial firms in the country. Small industries in Singapore are mostly family businesses run by manager-owner, and these entrepreneurs play a vital role in the national economy (Chng, 1978).

Because Singapore is an open economy and is lacking in natural resources, it is exposed to and has heavily relied on the outside world. With the recent emergence of larger scale enterprises adopting advanced technology and modern management methods, the local small industries are under strong pressure of a changing environment to upgrade the present level of

technology and management know-how, so as to compete in both the local and foreign markets and to provide a broad base of supporting industries to attract more foreign investments. Modern management methods are often not appropriate for small local business enterprises (Gan, 1979).

As a result, local Chinese organizations are facing a dilemma of being "modernized" yet wanting to retain the traditional cultural values. Chen (1983) has argued that to develop Chinese management does not mean to return or purify traditional Chinese management concepts. Instead, he advocated that we need to develop "modernized Chinese management", which is different from "Chinese modern management". The latter is often used to refer to Western management. He emphasized that management is a time bound concept. What is applicable in a traditional society may not be workable in a modern society. He suggested that we should incorporate the traditional culture and philosophy into modern society. Going back to the roots of tradition is necessary for expanding and discovering the richness of our history and culture. Learning from the West is necessary, but westernization is never the path for our own development. How are we going to integrate the



older culture and Western concepts is the task for the development of "modernized Chinese management" in Singapore. This research, supporting Chen's vision of "modernized Chinese management", aims to study the conception of "Chinese management" and to reflect and reveal the evolution and transformation of "Chinese management" in Singapore.

In this study, "Chinese management" is preferred more than "Singaporean management" because the study focused only on the local Chinese organizations in Singapore. It does not include Malay, Indian, or any other foreign and multinational organizations. Singaporean Chinese have claimed their management as "Chinese management" (Cheng, 1985) just as they have claimed their culture, values, customs, life-style, language as Chinese. It is to differentiate this claim from those of Malay, Indian and European. Chinese have always referred to their ethnicity instead of nationality.

Explicitly, this study represents only local Chinese organizations in Singapore. It does not reflect the experience of the Malay, Indian or others in Singapore. The experience of Chinese in Singapore may or may not be different from the Chinese in Hong Kong,

Taiwan, China or other countries. Further investigation on comparative Chinese management among Asian countries is certainly needed in the future.

### Problem Statement

There is a lack of knowledge on Chinese management in Singapore. This does not mean, however, that Chinese do not have their ways of organizing and managing. Their ways need to be explicated and defined. Inability to articulate and explicate the Chinese way of "management" is a pitfall and contributes to losing the Chinese cultural values in organizational life. To rediscover and redefine the Chinese concept of "management" is a way to help retain the Chinese cultural values in the modernized and industrialized world.

Bittner (1965) critiqued that researchers and theorists have often taken concepts, such as "organization", "structure", "technology" and "leadership" etc., for granted. He suggested, in fact, these are the concepts that need to be analyzed instead of theoretical constructs to be used for analysis.

Mintzberg (1973) critiqued that the words such as "planning", "organizing", "coordinating", and



"controlling" do not describe the actual work of managers at all. "They describe certain vague objectives of managerial work..... they are just ways of indicating what we need to explain" (Mintzberg, 1973:537).

Studies that have been done on Chinese organizations are mostly related to "management transferability" (Fukuda, 1983; Tsurumi, 1979), "managerial traits" (Evans, 1981), but not "management" per se. In my view, if we are to develop Chinese management, it is essential to start with the Chinese conception of "management" because conception is a basic mode of symbolism, central to the way in which humans forge their experience and knowledge of the world in which they live. Different conceptualizations of a subject guide, prefigure, and shape what is seen and known.

### Research Questions

This study attempts to describe the Chinese (in Singapore) conception of "management" and through that the deep meaning that contextualizes their behavior and understanding as they go about their tasks. The following are two basic questions in the inquiry:

- a. How do the Chinese managers (in Singapore) perceive and define "Management"?
- b. How do they "manage"?

The first question focuses on "perception", that is what they think it is and it should be. The second question focuses on "action", that is what they do and how they do it. These two questions will eventually help to understand the Chinese conception of management.

### Purpose Of The Study

It is the purpose of this study to explore the Chinese conception of management with the ultimate goal of exploring a new scope of organization theory for Chinese management in Asia, particularly in Singapore. More specifically, the purposes of this study are (1) to discover the Chinese managers' perception and definition of management (2) to describe the way they manage.

This study does not aim for comparative study nor to examine cross-cultural differences among Asian countries nor is it concerned about management transplantability, "How-to" technology, effectiveness,

efficiency, and productivity. It is concerned about the rediscovery of the richness of Chinese culture and values manifested in the definition Singaporean Chinese give to management.

The study is aimed for two groups of readers, primarily Chinese in Asian countries, and American and Western readers. The objectives for each groups are different.

1. Chinese organizational members, educators, theorists and students (in Asian countries and Singapore).

A. Due to the impact of increasing international business activities, and the popularity of Japanese management, there is a desire to discover and explicate "Chinese management" in Asian countries, such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore etc. The first conference on Chinese Management held at Taipei in 1984 indicated a strong need to discover and develop Chinese organizational and management theory which is based on the Chinese experience, values and norms. This study will be a contribution to the previous effort and enthusiasm in the understanding and development of "Chinese management" in Asian countries.

B. The literature on "Chinese management" has primarily remained at the theoretical level. Most papers presented at the Chinese Management conference and articles written on Chinese management focused mostly on theoretical speculation based on Chinese philosophy, such as Confucianism and I-Ching, or Western theoretical models, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Nevis, 1983) and Theory Y (Oh, 1976). Such effort is essential. However, more empirical studies need to be done to substantiate and support the theoretical speculation. "Chinese management" is not only what theorists think what it is or should be, but what organizational members perceive and do. The development of "Chinese management" should incorporate the knowledge and thoughts of theorists and practitioners. This study is, therefore, hoping to reflect and understand "Chinese management" from the practitioner's perspective.

C. Responding to Chen's (1983) concept of "modernized Chinese management", this study hopes to find ways to help those in the Chinese culture build on their traditions in their organizational practices and to enrich and add to our understanding of organizational phenomena.

## 2. To American Readers

A. This study defines "Chinese management" from the Singaporean Chinese managers' perspectives. The hope is to help American readers to understand Chinese management from Chinese perspectives.

B. This study calls for consciousness of the politics underlying cross-cultural or comparative study, and the epistemological assumptions held in any cross-cultural study.

C. The open door policy of China has attracted a lot of attention of Americans. Many studies have been done trying to understand Chinese management and organizational behaviors (Bing, 1984; Lindsay, 1983; Nevis, 1983; Otoole, 1981; Seligman, 1983). This study will be a contribution, to a certain degree, to the American interest in Chinese management.

### Approach To The Problem

This study is aimed to find out the Chinese conception of management in Singapore. I follow an interpretive paradigm of research and analysis (see Deetz, 1983; Burrell and Morgan, 1979), which

"is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:28).

Human beings are constantly attempting to develop conceptions about the world. They do so symbolically, attempting to make the world concrete by giving it name and form. Turner (1971) suggests that "since a culture rests in a commonly held fabric of meanings, these meanings should be sought by analyzing the knowledge which individuals possess" about their situations and examining the "understanding which the individual has of himself/herself, his/her bosses, subordinates, organization and the wider context within which his/her organization operates" (Turner, 1971:8).

Phenomenologists suggest that, rather than a person perceiving a world and then giving it an interpretation or meaning, perception is of an already meaningful (interpreted) world. What things are in experience is what they are seen as in everyday activity. The constant everyday experience of seeing something as something happens out of a context of more basic interpretations and in line with the project or task in which the organizational member is engaged.

Organizational objects and events are preinterpreted for the actor as s/he engages in life projects. The preconscious interpretive acts which compose the world as it is seen are grounded and connected to what we have come to call culture. In this sense, what is thinkable and doable, the interpretive processes and social reality, exist in the minds of the organizational members. As Redding and Ng (1983) put it: "All managers construct their own organizations in their own minds".

Koch and Deetz (1981) have argued that in understanding the way in which social world is conceptualized, it is important to give attention to the role of metaphor. The process of metaphorical conception is a basic mode of symbolism. "Metaphor is often regarded as no more than a literary and descriptive device for embellishment, but more fundamentally is a creative form which produces its effect through a crossing of images" (Morgan, 1980). Metaphorical conception thus has important implications for organizational study. Different metaphors can constitute and capture the nature of organizational life in different ways, each generating powerful, distinctive, but essentially partial kinds of insight.



Lakoff and Johnson (1980) showed that the conceptualization of the world is largely dependent upon interlocking systems of metaphors. These metaphorical expressions are an endemic part of our language and provide a fundamental structure for experience. The metaphoric process, seeing one thing in terms of another, is a fundamental aspect of human thought; it is how we come to know our world (Laksoff and Johnson, 1980). Koch and Deetz, in the same line of thought, said that "perception and knowing are linked in an interpretive process that is metaphorically structured, allowing us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another" (Koch and Deetz, 1981).

Morgan (1983) critiqued that the discipline of organization theory has been imprisoned by its metaphors. The orthodox view in organization theory has been based predominantly on the metaphors of machine and organism. The metaphor of a machine underwrites the work of the classical management theorists (eg. Taylor, 1911) and Weber's specification of bureaucracy as an ideal type (Weber, 1946). Meadows (1967) has even argued that organization itself is a metaphor referring to the experience of collective coordination and orderliness. Organization theory is



always rooted in the imagery of order and asserts that "the development of theories of organization is a history of the metaphor of orderliness".

Metaphor has been shown by many writers (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 1983; Ortony, 1975; Black, 1962; MacCormac, 1971; Manning, 1979; Smith & Simmon, 1983; Koch & Deetz, 1981; Mooij, 1976; Bougon, Weick & Binkhorst, 1977; Brown, 1976) as an effective way to understand how human beings make sense of their world and create their own reality.

In this study, metaphor is, therefore, used as a basic means to understand how Chinese managers construct their experience about Chinese management. Attention is paid to the language and metaphors used in their verbal expression and understanding of management.

In summary, this study is based on an interpretive paradigm, attempting to study how Chinese managers pattern and package their experience into knowledge and the rules and means of an unconscious logic applied in "management". The purpose of such an approach to inquiry is to uncover the structures of meaning which people apply to managerial situations. It produces a

description of the system of metaphors used by members to conceptualize their management experience.

### Significance Of The Study

Understanding of the Chinese conception of management has the potential to found a stronger basis for Chinese management development and to expand the scope of organizational study in Asian countries. Different conceptions provide different modes of understanding and insights of the varying constructions of the phenomena. It is hoped that through this study, more doors will be opened to researchers for further exploration of how the different conceptions affect the way people manage and are being managed. Increased knowledge of Chinese management will help Chinese managers to reflect and evaluate their managing process, and help them to better understand their experience in their own terms. The study may not be a direct help in their dilemma of a choice between "traditional" and "Western" management, however, increased clarity of what is viewed by some as "Chinese management" will assist in their decision. Specifically, this study is significant in its following contributions:

1. The study will contribute to the development of "Chinese management", particularly Chinese management in Singapore. It is hoped that through this research, a more insightful understanding of the Chinese's conception of "management" will be developed. The clarification of these concepts will provide a basis for further development of Chinese organization and management theory.
2. This research will provide a base for later comparison of "Chinese management" among Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, as well as for comparison among Chinese, American and Japanese management etc.
3. This research will be one of the few studies on "Chinese management" using an interpretive approach. It will enrich the empirical bases of development of "Chinese management". Hopefully, more similar research will be carried out in other Asian countries that will provide a stronger empirical foundation for organizational theory development in Asian countries.
4. This research will complement and add to the Western notions of management. It will help to enhance cross-cultural understanding in organization and management.
5. This research will, to some extent, call for consciousness and sensitivity of the

epistemological issues in cross-cultural management study, particularly for those Western researchers who are interested in other's culture.

It will help the organizational theorists to realize that "their theories are much less universal than they once assumed: theories also reflect the culture of the society in which they were developed" (Hofstede, 1984).

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The primary criterion for inclusion of any research studies and papers (both in Chinese and English) in this review was that it suggested or tested the notion of "Chinese management" or "Chinese organization" in Asian countries. Secondly, the research study or article provided data from, or discussed differences among, two or more cultures/countries related to Chinese organizational behavior. Thirdly, the study provided historical background on Chinese organizations in Singapore.

The purpose of this review is to provide a nonexhaustive analysis of organizational research related to Chinese organizational behavior. Though this review includes as much of the available literature as could be found, the review is not comprehensive. The problem of literature review is also like the exercise of looking at an elephant - what one sees depends on one's vantage point. The areas of findings and key studies which exemplify important issues are summarized in this section.

Literature that reviewed the research studies done on Chinese management originating in the United States are primarily based on Western theoretical notions (for examples, Nevis, 1983; Oh, 1976; Tung, 1981; Deyo, 1978; Evans and Sculli, 1981; Shenkar, 1984). Most of them found notable differences between the Eastern and Western values and behaviors in organization. However, they did not analyze the source and underlying philosophical assumptions of those values and behaviors. In contrast, many of the local articles written by Asian writers tend to be more philosophical in their approach of Chinese management (Ting, 1984; Wei, 1984; Woon, 1984; Goh, 1984; Chen and Liu, 1983, in Chinese), and have little empirical basis.

In the following, I will review some of the studies done in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, and classify them into:

Part I, Philosophical Approach;

Part II, Social-Cultural Approach;

Part III, Chinese Management in Singapore.

### **Part I : Philosophical Approach**

Most of these articles from this approach were written in Chinese and basically attempted to find

suggestive philosophical principles from Chinese classics, such as I-Ching, Confucianism, and the Legalist perspective.

Through review of the literature on Chinese philosophy and Chinese organizations, Lee (1985) suggested two paths for the development of Chinese management. The first path is following the tradition of Confucianism, which emphasizes self-cultivation, and a deep concern of human relationships, *jen* 仁. The concern of human relationship implies a more subjective approach in managerial practice, which contrasts to the Western "objective" approaches that objectify work and individuals.

From a management development point of view, the importance of Confucianism lies in its principles of self-cultivation. It means, in one sense, imitating some superior person and striving to correct faults in one's outlook and behavior. People in high positions have an added duty because they ought to serve as role models for their subordinates. In the West, such imitation is usually thought of as weakness. But in the East, including Chinese and Japanese, self-cultivation sees this imitation as a skill of the highest order. It demands that the individual constantly act to achieve



excellence by standards known to the society at large. Self-cultivation is a high social value. For this reason, the overriding value for managers is social harmony. Managers are as concerned about their actions in maintaining harmony as are their subordinates.

"If we were to ask, what is the one term which can be used to characterize the Chinese culture, I think most scholars would agree that the term is humanism. For the Chinese, the central task confronting human life lies in the correct orientation of the interpersonal relationships.....As a corollary to humanism, we find a strong people-orientation in the Chinese approach to tasks....." (Sheng, 1979)

Path 1 - Follow the Tradition of Confucianism.

Path 1 is to follow the tradition of Confucianism. Human relationships, jen 仁, is the essence of organization and management. Self-cultivation, the full development of personality and sensitivity to people's feelings are the tasks of both leaders and subordinates. Leaders are the role models of social order. Managers are to maintain the social harmony. Each member has social responsibility to people and society. The ultimate goal of organization is loyalty to family and nation.

Path 2 - Follow the traditions of Taoism and Buddhism.

The second path, which is different from the first path, is following the traditions of Taoism and



Buddhism. In this path, the process of organizing is "following the Nature", and dependent on Yuan 緣, a combination of conditions. Action is by no action; Leader is the follower; Change is not strategically planned but by "sudden enlightenment". The manager is not to control but to reflect like a mirror, to flow like the water, and to allow like nature. This path is certainly in contrast to the existing Western concepts of organizing, which emphasize strategic planning, schedules, control, standardization, rational and objective decision making etc.

The second path is a path that is based upon Chinese intuitive and contextual way of thinking. Such thinking is deeply embedded in the Chinese concept of "self" and "time". For Chinese, a person is not an individual but includes his/her inseparable relationships. Such a concept of "self" is an intertwined outcome of the three main traditions. In Buddhism, all human beings are manifestations of the Universal Self, but in their ignorance they claim for themselves a separate existence. Buddhists insist on the illusion of ego. It is exactly the opposite of Western civilization aiming at the full development of human ego. The Taoist virtues of 'wu-wei' and

selflessness flow is in the same direction with Buddhist. "Human being should lose themselves in Tao as fish lose themselves in water". "Your self is a body lent to you by the universe..... You do not own yourself". With Confucianism, the great-hearted person cultivates his virtues in order to serve his family, clan and society. Inspired by these three traditions, Chinese have a different sense of self-dignity compared to the West.

Not only do Chinese have a different concept of self and human relationships, they also have a different concept of time. In the West, time moves in a linear manner. For Chinese, returning is coming, which implies that time is cyclical. In Buddhism, life is illusory, time is therefore illusory. In Taoism, time travels in a circle, since life comes from non-being and returns to non-being.

In other words, path two is to follow the tradition of Taoism and Buddhism. The dynamics of Tao <sup>道</sup>, and Yuan <sup>緣</sup>, the combinations of conditions, is the essence of organization and management. To follow natural order, acting spontaneously and trusting ones own intuitive knowledge are the tasks for both leaders and subordinates. Leaders are "wu-wei" <sup>無為</sup>, acting

without actions. Managers are to support all things in their natural state. There is no ultimate goal of organization as organization is a process of coming and going, a cyclical of change, evolve from Nothing back to Nothing.

Based on these two paths, the concepts of "organization", "management", "leadership", "structure", "environment" etc. will be very different from the existing dominant Western organization theory. However, Lee (1985) suggested, to fully develop these two paths has been and will continue to be a long journey for the Chinese people.

## **Part II : Social-Cultural Approach**

Literature on Chinese management from this approach is relatively more in number and has a stronger empirical basis as it borrows research methodology from the Behavioural Science. Among the studies done in Asian countries, some features of Chinese management are highlighted. The following is a review of some significant findings of Chinese organization.

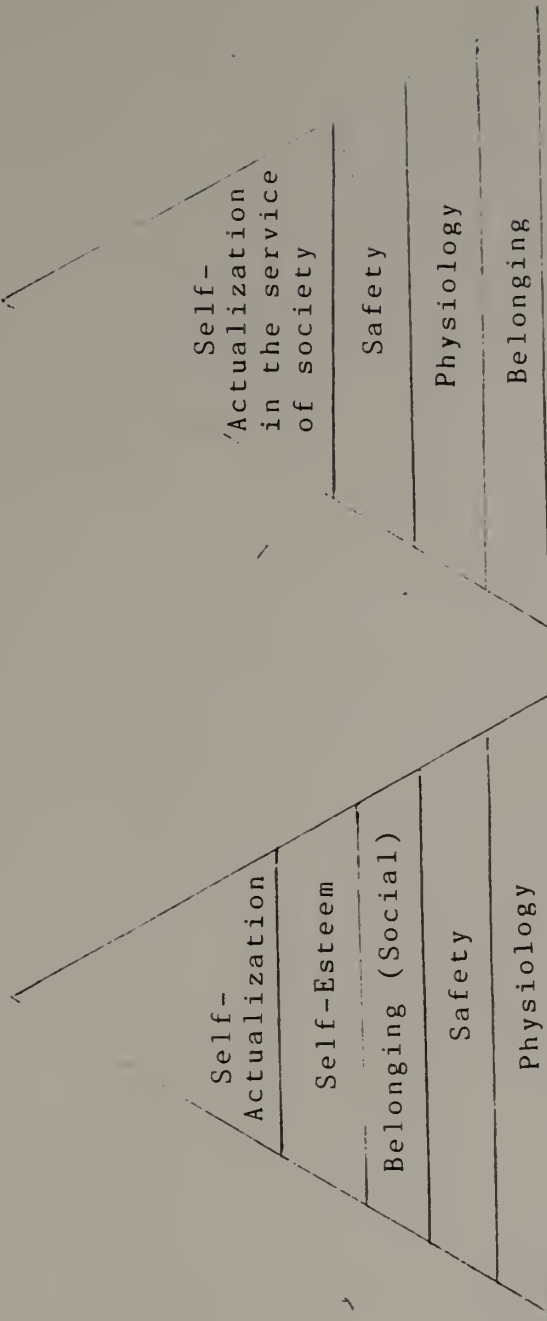
### **1. Different Emphasis on the Hierarchy of Needs.**

Nevis (1983) using an American perspective, the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, found out that such a model does not fit into the collectivist society such as China (Diagram 1).

He listed the most apparent cultural assumptions gleaned from the study of Chinese management structures and norms.

- a. Loyalty to the country is of the utmost importance; the nation has priority over everything.
- b. Emphasis is placed on central planning and the creation of a powerful state.
- c. Consideration for the family is very important.
- d. Personnel selection (ie. leadership) is based upon exploits or ideological contribution.
- e. Great respect is shown for age and traditional ways.
- f. Equity is more important than wealth.
- g. Saving and conserving (money, resources, etc.) are highly valued.
- h. Personal credit for accomplishments is denied : conformity is enforced.
- i. Every decision must take ideology into account.
- j. Communal property is considered more important than private possessions: collectivism is the best economic mechanism.
- k. Emphasis is placed on group forces for motivational purposes.

"An important thread in these assumptions ties together national loyalty, equity, avoidance of



Chinese Hierarchy of Needs  
Stems from: Eastern Culture  
Focuses on: Requirements of  
the social order

American Hierarchy of Needs  
Stems from: Western Culture  
Focuses on: Inner needs of  
individuals

Diagram 1 : Hierarchy of Needs (Nevis, 1980)

personal credit for accomplishment, importance of communal property, and emphasis on group forces for motivation. The most basic assumption is that being a good member of society and putting group goals before individual needs should govern all practices" (Nevis, 1983:19).

In comparison, he also listed the cultural assumptions underlying U.S. management concepts:

- a. The ideology of self-determinism is espoused. In other words, there is the belief that individuals can substantially influence the future.
- b. Freedom of expression and opinion is highly valued: individualism is encouraged.
- c. "To get ahead" is taken for granted: there should be equal opportunity for all.
- d. Independent enterprises are the most effective economic instruments : competition is the most effective mechanism.
- e. Private property is highly valued: limited state involvement is sought.
- f. Personnel selection is based on merit.
- g. Decisions must be based on objective analysis.
- h. Continual quest for improvement and change is encouraged:  
a pragmatic orientation toward change is upheld.
- i. High value is placed on specialization in all fields.
- j. There is a dominant view of the country as virtually having unlimited resources- the "streets paved with gold" hypothesis is espoused.
- k. "Fairness" is the guiding principle for the integration of the individual and group needs.

The striking contrast between U.S. and China is that:

"Chinese uphold loyalty to the state and national unity; Americans uphold the integrity of the individual.....In short, the Chinese assumptions are organized around the actualization of the group, organization, and state. U.S. assumptions, on the other hand, encourage the actualization of the individual.....Finally, U.S. assumptions reflect equality of opportunity, while Chinese assumptions focus on equality in the sharing of output" (Nevis, 1983:20).

Nevis's analysis showed the contrast of the assumptions underlying management concepts between the U.S. and China. However, he did not explain and explore further the origins of those assumptions. If we could understand the influence of Confucianism in Chinese culture, we would have a better understanding of the premises underlying Chinese management concepts. The explanation lies in the following Confucianist statements:

"People who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their nation. Those who wished to bring order to their nation would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal



life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the nation will be in order; and when the nation is in order, there will be peace throughout the world" (Lin, 1935:139-140).

## 2. The Chinese Concept of "Face"

Related to the value of self-cultivation is a strong sense of "face" among Chinese. Redding and Ng (1983) in their study on "Face" in Chinese Organizations in Hong Kong indicate the power of face as a mediating force in social interaction, particularly in business transactions or in social situations inside formal organizations.

"There are two dimensions to the Chinese concept of face: Lien 脸 or Mien Tzu 面子. Lien 脸 is good moral character. It carries with it the idea of being a 'decent human being'. It is more ascribed than achieved. Mien Tzu 面子 carries with it the idea of reputation based on one's own efforts. It is useful, but not essential to life. It is more achieved than ascribed..... To have no Lien 脸 is to have no integrity, and is 'about the most severe condemnation that can be made of a person'. To have no Mien Tzu 面子 is simply to have failed to achieve success, a condition that brings no real stigma" (Redding and Ng, 1983:100).

The Chinese socialization process inculcates sensitivity to "face" and a strong group consciousness. Face is the mechanism by which individuals come to invest in the group, and have a strong sense of group responsibility. "Face" is, therefore, the underlying norms and expectations, the traffic rules, in organizational relationships. The difference between

"face" and self-esteem is that self-esteem is the individual's view of himself/herself whereas face is the individual's assessment of how others close to him/her see him/her. The emphasis of "face" is certainly much greater in the East than the West. Both managers and subordinates are expected to help each other to maintain their "face". This concept and behavior is often seen as complex and chaotic in the Westerner's eyes.

The emphasis of "face" is associated with the concern of human feelings and respect of human relationships. It lies in Confucianist concept's of five human relationships: "Between father and son there should be affection between ruler and minister, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions; between old and young, a proper order; between friends, good faith."

### 3. Emphasis of "Relationship"

Supporting Redding and Ng's (1983) view, Warrington and McCall (1983) in their search of 'negotiating a foot into Chinese door' found that Chinese emphasize "friendship first and business second". "For Chinese, the business relationship is always subsumed under the moralistic notion of

friendship, loyalty and trustworthiness" (Sheng, 1979). The Chinese concern for relationships is such that they must have time to establish themselves and must be genuine. "The most significant issue raised by research on the question of negotiating with the Chinese is the need for patience" (Warrington and McCall, 1983:7), which implies that the Westerner must allow sufficient time to elapse for relationships to develop. Once such relationships have been established and a business rapport commenced it is likely that the association will be long-lasting.

#### 4. Intuition Decision-Making, Informal Organizational Structure, and Minimal Management Control.

Redding (1980) also studied Chinese managerial practices in Southeast Asia, which, to a great extent, are similar to Chinese practices in Hong Kong. The Chinese managerial practices in Southeast Asia emphasize (Redding, 1980:106):

- a. An intuitive, immediate kind of decision-making, without resort to logical analysis and rationality, and usually highly centralized decision-making.
- b. Informal organizational structure.
- c. Minimal management control of individual performance.

A Chinese manager would bring to a business transaction some combination of the following values (Redding, 1980:110):

- a. Desire for wealth as a source of security.
- b. A family consciousness which presents him with obligations which can best be fulfilled by maintaining company prosperity.
- c. A sense of Chineseness which is not always obtrusive but is nevertheless deep and influential. It can also come out as an anti-other group feeling.
- d. A sense of dignity and sensitivity to 'face', often emerging as concern over rank (ie. what rank is the person sent to deal with him).
- e. A desire to avoid conflict, to maintain social harmony.
- f. A desire to establish a friendship style of relationship in a business transaction.
- g. A pragmatic sense of getting things to work by seeing different situations in different ways, not resting on any universal set of guidelines.
- h. The assumption that trust is important and to be used, and a consequent disdain for the contract type of relationship.

##### 5. Chinese Concept of "Family"

Paul Hsu (1984, 1985), who is particularly interested in studying "family" and "organization" in Asian cultures, has shown how interpersonal relationships among family members, and the influence of family structure and values impact on Chinese firms. He identified three special features commonly

associated with Chinese business firms. They are : 1) the relatively short life span of the Chinese firms, 2) the low level of loyalty of the employee, and 3) the more personalized type of loyalty paid to a particular individual rather than to the office or the organization as a whole. He seeks explanation of these features through the understanding and analysis of traditional family systems.

"Being the primary agent of socialization of a culture the family undoubtedly has exerted the most important influence on the formation of an individual's value system and role expectation which, in turn, is brought into the organization to form the basis of cooperation and interaction with others" (Hsu, 1984).

In his view, family will persist to play a critical role in the study of Chinese organization. Family is important in any culture. However, it is extraordinarily so in the Chinese culture. "Relation among family members provided the human basis for the moral virtues of the Chinese (Nakamura, 1964). Hsu (1984) listed out some of the significant characteristics of Chinese family that have strong impact on Chinese organization.

a. The concept of "relationship" .

The Chinese have been characterized as a people very particularistic in dealing with others. The

so-called "Five Relations", i.e. sovereign-minister, parent-child, husband-wife, elder-younger brothers, and friends, make the acceptable patterns of interpersonal relationships. Correspondingly, there are five virtues; they are, loyalty, filial piety, faithfulness, care, and sincerity, in the same order of the Five Relations. "Chinese have learned relationships with others almost exclusively from the family experience" (Hsu, 1984).

b. The concept of perpetuity and the emphasis on blood relations

Because of the fen-chia system (Hsu, 1984), Chinese family does not have a property-holding unit. Every son of the family has an equal share of the family property by birthright. It results in the property fragmentation when children grow up and even more so after generations. It is believed that such division of property is the main factor that contributes to the short life span of Chinese enterprises.

c. Parental Authority, Filial Piety, and Loyalty

In Confucius saying: "Those who love their parents dare not show hatred to others. Those who respect their parents, dare not show rudeness to others" (quoted from



Lin, 1939). Filial piety, to the Chinese, is considered as the first and the ultimate of all virtues. A child is expected to learn early in his/her life that s/he must be respectful and obedient toward his/her parents. "No other culture in history has placed such a stress upon filial piety as has the Chinese" (Pye, 1968, quoted from Hsu, 1984).

#### 6. The Art of Chinese Baseball

Siu (1978) suggested five basic management principles from the strategic artistry of Chinese Baseball:

- a. Act from an instantaneous apprehension of the totality
- b. Subsume yourself and resonate
- c. Maintain multiple tactical targets within attainable reach until the moment of final commitment
- d. Be propitious
- e. Orchestrate the virtual presences

Chinese believe that everything is continually changing - not only the events themselves, but also the very rules governing those events. Such concept is alien to the scientific tradition of fixed boundary conditions, clearly defined variables, non-subjective assessment, and rational consistency within a closed



system. In the Chinese baseball game, everything is in flux, and all systems are open. Siu emphasized that "to be in control of the situation is to ride the moment on the wing in an agglomerate gut-feeling fitness. Science and art, cause and effect, plans and operations, means and ends - all merge in the instant of the act" (Siu, 1978:88). He called it the Master of Action.

7. Social-Cultural System - Individualism vs Collectivism; Large vs Small Power Distance, Strong vs Weak Uncertainty Avoidance; Masculinity vs Femininity.

Hofstede (1984) stated that:

"Management deals with a reality that is man-made. People build organizations according to their values, and societies are composed of institutions and organizations that reflect the dominant values within their culture. Organization theorists are slowly realising that their theories are much less universal than they once assumed: theories also reflect the culture of the society in which they were developed" (Hofstede, 1984:81).

He did a research project on 50 countries using statistical analysis which showed that the differences among countries reflected the existence of four underlying value dimensions along which the countries could be positioned. The four dimensions represent elements of common structure in the cultural systems of the countries. They are based on four very fundamental issues in human societies to which every society has to

find its particular answers. The following is the list of four dimensions adopted from his article (Hofstede, 1984:83-84)

a. Individualism versus Collectivism

"Individualism stands for a preference for a loosely knit social framework in society wherein individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. Its opposite, Collectivism, stands for a preference for a tightly knit social framework in which individuals can expect their relatives, clan, or other in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among individuals. It relates to people's self-concept: 'I' or 'we'".

b. Large versus Small Power Distance

"Power Distance is the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally. This affects the behaviour of the less powerful as well as of the more powerful members of society. People in Large Power distance societies accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place which needs no further justification. People in Small Power Distance societies strive for power equalization and demand justification for power inequalities. The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is how a society handles inequalities among people when they occur. This has obvious consequence for the way people build their institutions and organizations".

c. Strong versus Weak Uncertainty Avoidance

"Uncertainty Avoidance is the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. This feeling leads them to beliefs promising certainty; and to maintaining institutions protecting conformity. Strong Uncertainty Avoidance societies maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant towards deviant persons and ideas. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance societies maintain a more relaxed atmosphere in which practice

counts more than principles and deviance is more easily tolerated".

d. Masculinity versus Femininity

"Masculinity stands for a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success. Its opposite, Femininity, stands for a preference for relationships, modesty, caring for the weak, and the quality of life".

In his findings all less economically developed countries score closer to the collectivist end of the scale and larger Power Distance, while the more economically developed countries score closer to the individualist end of the scale and smaller Power Distance. On the Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity-Femininity dimensions, both less and more economically developed countries are widely spread. There are variations among Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore in the above mentioned four dimensions of social-cultural system. However, as compared to the United State, these countries ranked lower in Individualism, and higher in Power Distance (Hofstede, 1984:85).

Hofstede then discussed the implications of cultural differences for management. For example, there will be a gap in transfer of management skills from an individualistic society to a collectivist society in a number of respects (Hofstede, 1984:86):

- a. The validity of economic theories based on self-interest.
- b. The validity of psychological theories based on self-actualization.
- c. The nature of the employer-employee relationship: whether this is considered as calculative or as morally based.
- d. Priority in business to the task or to the relationship.
- e. The role of family in the work situation.
- f. The importance of face and of harmony.

Although Hofstede (1984) did not study "Chinese management" per se, the four dimensions he proposed have provided a good framework for understanding the discrepancies among different countries and has highlighted the problems and gaps of transferring managerial skills from an individualistic society to a collectivist society, or from a large Power Distance society to a small Power Distance society.

#### 8. Chinese Cognition and its Relationship to Management.

There is little writing on Chinese management from a cognitive perspective. In Redding's (1980) study on Cognition as an aspect of culture and its relationship to management processes, the Chinese case seems to be outstanding.

Redding (1980) based his work on the assumption that:

"Social settings are defined and must be analysed in terms of the participant's epistemology: organization problems are mind-environment problems.....Cause maps will help us find that by a non-logical, but highly intelligent mental process, organization participants perform translation from the world of experience to the world of mind" (Redding, 1980:128).

He found that Western cognition has these elements: Logical, sequential connections, use of abstract notions of reality which represent universals, and emphasis on cause. Chinese cognition, on the other hand, is intuitive and more reliant on sense data, is non-abstract and non-logical, more emphasis on the particular rather than the universal, and is highly sensitive to context and relationships.

"Chinese has a tendency towards non-abstract thought. Chinese mind thinks pragmatically and with greater immediacy. Universal concepts such as 'productivity', 'morale', 'marketing policy', are replaced by thinking much more of specific instances and cases. Things tend to be viewed only in their own contexts and universal principles are discarded in favour of highly situational analysis. This gives freer rein for the use of intuition as opposed to logic, feeling rather than analysis, hunch rather than calculated extrapolation" (Redding and Martyn-Johns, 1979:111).

The study examines the paradigms generally typical of Chinese as opposed to Westerners, and considers the implications of differences in cognitive systems for managerial behaviour. Redding (1980) considers Chinese and Western forms of cognition under the following headings (Redding, 1980:131)

- a. Causation or the form of explanation of connections between events phenomena.
- b. Probability which is the extension of this same process into prediction.
- c. Time which is looked at in terms of its 'shape', importance, and uniformity.
- d. Self which is the view of the individual, especially in relation to others.
- e. Morality which is seen in terms of the mechanism of its operation and controlling force, rather than in any absolute sense.

When a Westerner thinks about a problem, it is normal for him/her to use abstract concepts or constructs such as 'productivity', 'morale', leadership style' and to link them in logical and sequential set of connections. The Chinese mind tends to resort instead to ideas which are much more concrete.

A <sup>a</sup>parallel view of such a theme is taken by Nakamura (1964) in one of the leading works on Oriental thinking. In this, he singles out the following characteristics as typical of Chinese thinking:

- a. Emphasis on the perception of the concrete
- b. Non-development of abstract thought
- c. Emphasis on the particular, rather than universals
- d. Practicality as a central focus
- e. Concern for reconciliation, harmony, balance.



As a result of Chinese cognition, the Chinese forms of organization seem to be characterized as the followings:

- a. Intuitive, contextual, immediate decision-making, without a formal planning framework.
- b. Informality of organization structure
- c. Low objectivity of performance measurement.
- d. Personalistic external linkages to suppliers/customers
- e. Nepotism, patronage and cliques internally
- f. Centralization of power
- g. A high degree of strategic adaptability

Reddings (1980) has summarized the Chinese paradigms and managerial activity in a matrix (Diagram 2). He suggested that further research explanation is necessary.

## 9. Paradigmatology

Maruyama (1974) used the term "Paradigmatology" to refer to "a science of structures of reasoning which vary from discipline to discipline, from profession to profession, from culture to culture, and sometimes even from individual to individual".

In his view, the difficulty in cross-disciplinary, cross-professional and cross-cultural communication lies not so much in the fact that the communicating parties use different vocabularies of languages to talk about the same thing, but rather in the fact that they



	<i>Causality.</i>	<i>Probability</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Morality</i>
Planning	Not formally developed	More use of hunch and intuitive; fatalistic view	Low-priority to deadlines; Non-linearity		
Organizing	Abstract entities not separated out.		Co-ordination loose	Personalistic networks	
Leading				High subjectivity. Obligation nets. Paternalism.	Sensitivity to face. Pragmatism in business ethics.
Control	'Control cycle' not perceived.		Problems of urgency and common perception of co-ordinating deadlines.	Objective performance measures not used.	Use of shame mechanism.

Diagram 2 : Chinese Paradigm and Managerial Activity  
(Redding, 1980)

use different structures of reasoning. If the communicating parties remain unaware that they are using different structures of reasoning, but are aware of their communication difficulties only, each party tends to perceive the communication difficulties as resulting from the other parties' illogicality, lack of intelligence or even deceptiveness and insincerity. He may also fall into an illusion of understanding while being unaware of his misunderstandings.

More people have started to be aware of the paradigmatic differences in different disciplines and at different times. They use different terminology to describe the difference. Systems engineers, operational researchers and some experimental psychologists have used the term "models". Some philosophers and logicians have used the terms "logics". Anthropologists and psycholinguists have used the term "cognitive structure", and more recently "epistemology". More recently sociologists began using the term "paradigms" mainly because of their effort to gain their inspiration from physics and because Thomas Kuhn's work on paradigms in physics has become respectable among sociologists.

Maruyama (1974) presented three paradigms: a. hierarchical, unilateral, homogenistic, universalistic, categorical, classificational, deductive, rank-ordering, competitive paradigm with predetermined universe; b. individualistic, isolationistic, random, nominalistic, atomistic, statistical, probabilistic, egocentric paradigm with thermodynamically and informationally decaying universe; c. mutualistic, reciprocally interactive, heterogeneity-creating, network-structured, relational, contextual, complementary, symbiotic paradigm with self-generating and self-organizing universe based on mutual causality.

Based on the Paradigms, Maruyama (1984) went on to study Mindscapes in understanding Multicultural management. He developed cause maps which he called Mindscape analysis in the study of management behaviour and thought. The four frequently found mindscape types are: the H-type which is homogenistic, hierarchical and classificational; the I-type which is heterogenistic, isolationistic and random; the S-type which is heterogenistic, interactive and pattern-maintaining; the G-type which is heterogenistic, interactive and pattern-generating. He discussed how mindscape types influence the choice of organizational structure,

strategic rationales, planning procedures, management philosophy, the principles for dealing with subcontractors, suppliers, distributors and competitors, and attitudes toward cultural and individual heterogeneity among managers and workers.

### **Part III : Chinese Management In Singapore**

In nineteenth-century Singapore, the line of trade established by the Chinese pioneer provided a very important link for his followers. There are a few inherent features that characterized the Chinese organizations. Some writers have tried to describe the characteristics of local Chinese organizations (Cheng, 1985; Chng, 1978; Lau, 1974; Low, 1973; Ng, 1972; Redding, 1982; Teoh, 1984; Yong, 1973). The following is a summary of the significant characteristics of the traditional Chinese organizations described by these authors in Singapore:

#### **1. Small-scale**

It is important to realise that the overwhelming majority of the Chinese firms are small-scale family concerns. In the Chinese case, growth along Western lines, which usually is by growing the corporate body

itself, appears to be resisted. There are large Chinese companies, but they appear still to be run in the same way as small Chinese companies. They remain in family control. Rational legal authority is not adopted. Size is often achieved by collecting together a set of small businesses and leaving them uncoordinated except at the financial level. More complex forms of large scale enterprise have not developed: there are no Chinese multinationals. It is possible to argue that the Western bureaucracy developed because rationality of the Western mind fostered it. Equally the Chinese paradigm does not foster it. The "Small is Beautiful" (Schumacher, 1973) is certainly applicable in the Chinese case.

## 2. Family Business

The Chinese businesses in Singapore are typically run by families. It is very common to find in most privately held companies registered locally that the shareholders are all members of the family including uncles, cousins and nephews. Most businesses belong to, and are managed by, partnerships among groups of relatives. Overseas contacts are usually based on uncles and cousins living overseas. Business contacts

are friends, and virtually all business is based on personal contact. The importance of family kinship ties is seen in employment, in establishing a trade and in its subsequent expansion.

### 3. Day-to-day Planning

The lack of formal planning framework in the average Chinese company was described as one of the characteristics of Chinese management. The planning of events is a day-to-day matter and is usually kept in the hands of the proprietor. There are no recognizable planning systems in a formal sense and no budgeting, except in a rudimentary form. The organization structure also is normally ill-defined: job definitions are not given and areas of responsibility are not clearly assigned. The functions of a business normally acknowledged as distinct by Westerner, such as marketing, finance, personnel, etc., are not evident in Chinese firms. As a result of these characteristics there is a lack of objective performance measurement and, in the event, the control of people's behavior is dependent on the relations in a personal sense with the proprietor.

#### 4. Personalistic Relations

Redding (1980) described that the manner of working of personalistic relations inside the Chinese firm appears to take three forms:

1. Nepotism which maintains ownership and control within a family group.
2. Patronage, which can be extended by a superior to subordinates outside the family network.
3. The development of cliques, usually based on clan affiliation (those sharing a surname) or regional affiliation (eg. the Chiu-Chow, the Cantonese)

Yong's (1973) study of 60 commercial firms in Singapore found 37 of them to be nepotistic, and proposed that they were not necessarily "transitional" forms of organization that are due to succumb to an inevitable process of rationalization.

On the other hand, Low's (1973) study of a further 60 Singapore firms indicated that the type of industry did in fact affect nepotism.

#### 5. Centralization of Power

Lau (1974) provides a description of a small Singapore Chinese company operating as a partnership. It is evident that apart from the twenty employees with



short service and low hierarchical position, the company is composed of people whose relationship to the owner can be described in terms of degrees of friendship and degrees of relatedness. In such organizations, the centralization of power is maintained because of a. close association between ownership and control, b. the Chinese ethic of respect and compliance toward the father-figure. In the fourteen firms in Lau's sample, delegation of authority and managerial functions away from the proprietor was minimal. Even sons had little participation in the decision-making process, and ownership was described as providing an obvious authority and privilege.

#### 6. Industry and Frugality

The Chinese dedication to work and a simple way of life are two features considered to be closely related to success. Industry and frugality are two sides of the Chinese coin of success. They are two crucial elements in the process of "primitive accumulation of capital". The Chinese expression kai Yuan Jie Liu (开源节流), which literally means to open up the source and regulate the flow, aptly describes the Chinese philosophy of accumulating capital by exploring the

sources of revenue on the one hand and tightening expenditure on the other hand. Luck as a factor strikes only once or twice in one's lifetime, the most important factors are industry and frugality. Throughout Chinese civilization, industry and frugality are two of the many values exalted as virtue to be pursued and emulated.

#### 7. Xing Yong, 信用 Trust

The importance of trust, 信用 Xin Yong in Chinese business can never be overemphasized. Whilst a helping hand from an established merchant in the initial stage may start the ball rolling, its continued existence and development rely on a person's credit standing. The Chinese term for credit standing is 信用 Xin Yong. Without 信用 Xin Yong, there can be no business at all since all business on credit is only carried out among those who are familiar with each other. Among the Chinese, business transactions contracted over the telephone involving amounts as large as a few million dollars are common. Since 信用 Xin Yong forms the basis of verbal contract, there is no need for a formal legal contract, a practice established since the early days. Legal contract takes

time and therefore is shunned by both parties. However, a person's 信用 Xin Yong in business also takes time to establish -usually the longer the more reliable.

For the Chinese merchants, once a verbal contract is entered into, it is expected to be honoured irrespective of whatever emergency that may arise. Since news spreads fast and far within the closely-knit Chinese society, a breach of contract would bring immediate business sanctions and severe moral condemnation. In such a case, the creditor would never give up his hope of recovering his bad debt until reasonable settlement is reached, preferably through the arbitration of a third party such as the trade association.

#### 8. Gang Qing, 感情 Affection or Emotion

With good credit standing, a Chinese merchant normally enjoys good personal relationships. One important aspect of personal relationships is the emotion or affection for the familiar and related. The term "affection" or "emotion" is the English translation of the Chinese Gang Qing 感情, a concept for which it is difficult to find an exact English equivalent. By and large, affection or emotion forms

the basis of personal relationships and therefore it is an important factor in handling human affairs and business transactions. For instance, the preference of Chinese entrepreneurs to employ his relatives and the avoidance of litigation may be partly explained by the influence of Gang Qing 感情. The expression "We Chinese do not do such a thing" reflects not only a value judgement but also, more importantly, the Chinese attachment to Gang Qing .

#### 9. Sense of Obligation

Within Chinese culture, a strong sense of obligation is embedded in each individual. This is manifested most clearly in filial piety and extended to relatives and friends. In the business context, assistance and concessions extended during difficult times would constitute goodwill which could be utilized at a later occasion. Similarly, undesirable conflicts would diminish the goodwill. Hence a longer term view of business dealings is preferred and whenever opportunity presents itself, steps should be taken to increase one's stock of goodwill. Employment of relatives is also a sense of obligation, sometimes despite their qualification to the job.

#### 10. Opportunity and Luck

Finally, there are the factors of opportunity and luck. In business, opportunity exists at all times and it is up to the farsighted to exploit this opportunity. As commercial activities in Singapore are closely tied to international trade, to be well informed of the world's socioeconomic and political events and trends is another important key to commercial success. Apart from the mass media, personal social contacts are perhaps the most important sources of business information. Almost every personal social contact provides an opportunity for seeking business information. Thus at a restaurant, coffee-shop, funeral, wedding, association's function, or on board a vehicle - all are opportunities for making new acquaintances and renewing friendship.

#### Conclusion

The literature review has discussed "Chinese management" in general from philosophical and social-cultural perspectives, and also addressed specific characteristics of "Chinese management" in Singapore. This background is helpful in three ways:

1. it provides a basis for approaching the research study by supplying aspects of the current understanding of "Chinese management";
2. it provides some clues for framing a research design and methods in terms of sample and interview questions;
3. it shows the need for new research approach to explore different insights of "Chinese management".

No study has been done on the Chinese conception of management. An interpretive study will reveal a new insight of how Chinese managers perceive and behave in management. Specifically, the researcher will attend to the language, metaphors and symbols used by Chinese managers in their managerial practice.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology of this study. Five sections will be presented: A. the rationale of the research design; B. the process of qualitative research and the role of the researcher; C. the preliminary study; D. the actual research design, and E. epistemological issues.

#### Rationale

The research methodology in this study, which is based on the interpretive perspective, primarily uses indepth interview for the purpose of exploring and analyzing the Chinese conception of "management".

"How does one know what the respondents say is true?" A qualitative researcher is often challenged by this question. The issue of "truth" in qualitative research is a complicated one. What the qualitative researcher is interested in is not truth per se, but rather in the perspectives. "If men define situations are real, they are real in their consequences."



(Thomas, 1928:572, quoted from Taylor and Bogden, 1984:99).

The purpose of this study basically attempts to define and clarify the Chinese managers' perception of "management", and how they manage. The concern is not on whether the Chinese management described by the sample group is good or bad, right or wrong. Rather it is a basic concern on what is and/or what is not Chinese management in their own defined reality.

The role of a researcher in qualitative research is similar to the one of an anthropologist; one who is interested to find out the life of the people and their culture, and who is committed to reflect and reveal their life story based on the subject's frame of reference.

As in any qualitative research, the pre-planned research design is only used as a guide in data collection. The actual data collection depends a lot on the flow of the happenings and the responses of the subjects of study. The researcher is as much of an artist as a scientist.

#### Indepth Interview

Mintzberg (1973:229) summarized seven methods by which to study managerial work. Indepth interview, according to Mintzberg, is one of the most appropriate methods in the study of perception. Nevertheless, there are advantages and disadvantages to indepth interview:

#### Advantages

1. It offers exploration and clarification of attitudes and value meaning, i.e., the subjective human experience. In the interview situation, the interviewee is encouraged to discuss how he feels about the organization and work, how he behaves or would behave in certain situations, and how he believes the situation should be treated. The free-response format of the interview produces a depth and breadth of descriptive information, elicited through the probing of the researcher concerning those beliefs, feelings, opinions, and action-orientations on which a perception is based.

2. It has an advantage of immediate clarification. Questions can be restated and rephrased whenever the meaning is unclear to the respondent. Conversely, the researcher, through the use of probing and paraphrasing, is able to assist the interviewee in

clarifying or expanding on vague or contradictory responses.

3. As an exploratory study, the range of possible responses could not have been easily or accurately anticipated. Therefore, the interview format offers the greatest possibility for the discovery of new information that is stored in the interviewee's mind.

#### Disadvantage

The disadvantage of this method is that the interviewee is expected to translate complex internal reality into meaningful abstraction. Not all interviewees can do this effectively.

Through indepth interviewing, the researcher tries to develop an open and honest relationship with Interviewees. However, the researcher has to be alert to exaggerations and distortions in the interviewees' stories as people sometimes have a tendency to hide important facts about themselves in everyday life and tend to exaggerate their successes and deny or downplay their failures.

Researcher as the research tool (See Appendix A)

The qualitative research with an emphasis on intensive interviewing presents particular opportunities and potential problems for the research study. In this particular study, which relied almost exclusively on the data gathered from subjects through verbal interaction with the researcher, was subject to the biases and preconceptions of the researcher. However, the benefit was the researcher's privilege and ability to penetrate the deep meaning of the subjects studied. Such a research study required certain qualities of the researcher. An "insider" of the culture is more able to perceive, to penetrate and to explore the insights of the reality construction. A few interviewees had made remarks on the advantage of the researcher as an "insider" :

"You are a Chinese, you understand the Chinese language and Chinese culture" (Interviewee H);

"You should have no problems. Because you are writing about the Chinese organization. You yourself are a Chinese. Easier" (Interviewee T.F.);

"You are a Singaporean. To do this kind of study should be easier. Moreover you were Chinese educated before. It is easier for you to talk with people like us. Otherwise, an English educated person talk with us, I would feel difficult to know what he needs. If I express to him, he may not be able to understand" (Interviewee T.F.)

"You are bilingual, you speak dialects, you can understand" (Interviewee T.EB.).

"Your father is also doing Chinese business, you should know the Chinese way" (Interviewee T.EB.)

"You are the second generation, also Chinese educated. You understand how our parents' generation is, and our Chinese values" (T.F.)

The researcher realized and appreciated the fact that her knowledge of the subject matter, the feelings for it, and her experience had contributed to the richness and depth of the research, yet such subjective sentiments had a potential to bias the research findings. Attention was especially paid throughout the process, from information collection to analysis, to as accurately as possible represent the views of the interviewees.

#### Unstructured Observation was unapplicable

Indepth interview and unstructured observation were initially chosen to be the research instruments. However, the unstructured observation method did not work out well due to two reasons: a. the constraint of time. The actual field work was carried out between December and January, which was at the end of the year, and close to the Chinese New Year. Most of the interviewees were very busy at that period of time. b.

Most of them did not sit in the office to work. They usually run around (in the organization setting or outside the organization). The researcher had to follow the interviewees around if she were to observe them. Most interviewees didn't like the idea of "following them". Therefore unstructured observation was not fully carried out. However, interviewees were asked to describe in details their daily activities, and how they manage.

### **Process**

A research study is a thinking process of a researcher, plus an interactive process between the researcher, the dissertation committee and the subjects of study. The actual research design is a thought, a product of a thinking process. It is important to know the thought as it is to understand the thinking behind the thought.

The actual research design emerged after a long process of preliminary thinking, experimenting, designing, implementing, modifying and re-shaping. It was a cyclical process, and it often took longer time than anticipated at each stage.

The following diagram (Diagram 3) is a record of the steps and time period involved throughout the whole research:

Diagram3

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Time period</u>
<u>Preliminary plan</u>	
Step 1	Defining the research purpose and research question Mar-May 86
Step 2	Entering the field Apr-May 86
Step 3	Building up the frame of reference May-June 86
<u>Preliminary study</u>	
Step 4	Conducting a preliminary study May-June 86
Step 5	Analyzing the preliminary study May-June 86
Step 6	Developing a network in the field Apr-June 86
<u>Research Design</u>	
Step 7	Developing an actual research design July-Nov 86
Step 8	Finalizing the research proposal with the research committee Sept-Nov 86
<u>Implementation</u>	
Step 9	Re-entering the field Dec 86
Step 10	Conducting interviews Dec-Jan 87
Step 11	Modifying the research design Jan 87
Step 12	Assessing the usefulness of the information collected in relation to the research question Jan 87
Step 13	Planning for the research analysis Jan 87
Step 14	Terminating the interview relationships Jan 87
<u>Analysis</u>	
Step 15	Transcribing and translating the interviews Mar-Apr 87
Step 16	Building up "rapport" with the information collected Apr 87



Step 17	Exploring different ways in making sense of the information collected	Apr 87
Step 18	Developing various frameworks for analysis	May 87
Step 19	Writing and analyzing the research findings	May-June 87
Step 20	Concluding the study	June 87

The researcher started with a research purpose and a research question in mind, that served as the focal point throughout the stages of the data collection. A clear research purpose and research question were very important in guiding the direction in the process of interviews.

With the research purpose and question in mind, the researcher started to enter the field in Singapore. Two approaches were used to enter the gateway. One was through the help of personal friends, the other was through the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The researcher met with managers who worked in different fields to probe their experience and perception of Chinese management. During the process, attention was particularly paid to the language used and the themes articulated. A frame of reference was gradually developed for a design of a preliminary study. At this stage, the researcher also established relationships with people and organizations that shared a common interest in the related field. A network of

resources was developed and was necessary for the execution of the study at the later stage.

A preliminary study was conducted to experiment with the indepth interview method with Chinese managers and to explore the potential answers to the research question. The main purpose was to sharpen the focus of the actual study in terms of the sample group, research methods and interview questions.

Eight interviewees were chosen to be the sample group in the preliminary study. The information collected were preliminarily analyzed to sort out the common themes and language used in their description of their organizations. As a result of the preliminary study, a network of support was established in the field of study; A rapport was developed between the researcher and respondents for the actual research information collection.

After the preliminary study, the researcher returned to the States to meet with the research committee to redefine the focus of the study. An actual research design was finalized. Two research methods, indepth interview and unstructured observation, were designed for information collection.

During the time between the preliminary study and the actual research, written correspondence was maintained between the researcher and interviewees. The actual research began in December 1986. Most of the interviewees were informed of the researcher's intended return to Singapore for further information collection.

In the actual process of information collection, interviews were conducted. However, unstructured observation did not work out due to time constraints and technical difficulty. Consequently, modification had to be made in the research design. The managers, instead of being observed, were asked to describe what they do in their everyday managerial work.

Interviews were tape-recorded. There was less hesitance in tape-recording the second time around compared to the preliminary study because a personal relationship by that time had already been established.

A personal relationship between the researcher and interviewees was critical in the process of information collection. Most of the interviewees asked questions about the researcher's family, educational background and future career plan.

Preliminary analysis was done during the process of information collection. Some of the initial findings

were shared with the interviewees in the last interview. They were each assured a copy of a summary of the final analysis when it is completed.

The transcription and translation of the recorded interviews began upon the researcher's return to the States. It was a very tedious and time consuming process; nevertheless, a very important ground work for analysis. During the process of transcribing and translating, the information collected were much more internalized and better understood. The researcher had to spend time to "stay with" the information collected for a period of time to try to make different sense out of it. This period of time was crucial in the development of the frame of analysis. Different images and scenarios emerged in the researcher's mind while reading the transcriptions. These images and scenarios actually lay the foundation for the analysis at the later stage.

A frame of analysis was finally developed to encompass the different insights of the information collected in relation to the research questions. The framework once developed gave ease to the writing and analysis of the research.

The overall research took about sixteen months to be completed. It was a long and challenging project. The design of the study, in terms of methodology, was a combination of using intuitive contemplation and scientific-systematic analysis, and using both Chinese and English language. The process was in some ways cumbersome and complicated, however, it was necessary. The findings of the research will hopefully contribute to the development of Chinese management in Asian countries.

### **Preliminary Study**

In order to have a strong foundation for the research, a preliminary study was conducted a few months before the actual research.

#### **1. Purposes**

The purposes of the preliminary study were:

- a.. To test out the method of unstructured interview with Chinese managers;
- b. To have a sense of the themes and language used and to develop a frame of reference for future interviews;
- c. To find out the degree of accessibility to the community of Chinese organizations;
- d. To collect information for sampling;

e. To further explore the findings of the literature on Chinese management.

## 2. Sample (Appendix B)

The preliminary study was certainly experimental. Eight respondents, including seven managers of different organizations and one school principal, were interviewed in the preliminary study. They were recommended by personal friends. Among the eight of them, two were from Japanese-owned organizations with local management, two were from government organizations, and four were from local Chinese organizations. Two were interviewed in English, four in Mandarin and two with a combination of Mandarin, Teochew and Hokkien.

## 3. Procedure

All interviews were started with the researcher's description of the research and the purpose of the interview. The interviewees were invited to share with the researcher their personal experience in management with reference to their organizations. Subsequent questions were asked according to the flow of the interviews.

Some of the interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Notes were taken during and after the interviews.

#### 4. Results (Appendix C)

The information collected were classified into fifteen theme categories. They included a. small size, b. family business, c. parental style, d. Interpersonal relationships, e. conflicts and resolution, f. Emotion (Ren Qing) 感情, g. Trust (Xing Yong) 信用, h. flexibility, i. day to day planning; intuitive decision making, j. luck and opportunity, k. comparison to the U.S. and Japan, l. social and political context, m. personal history related to organization, n. traditional and modern management, o. metaphors.

#### 5. Discussion

The preliminary study provided the researcher a better sense of Chinese organizations. This experiment helped the researcher to make final decisions on the research design, methods, sampling, interview questions, and language used in the interview.

Based on observation from the preliminary study, there were several implications for the research design and method of the actual study:



a. The difference between old and young interviewees.

The old and young interviewees showed several differences in the ways they responded in the interview:

i. Past vs present approach

Each of the older interviewees tended to tell stories on how he came to Singapore, how he struggled to survive, how he started or took over the business, and what problems he encountered, etc. The younger interviewees tended to be more present and future oriented, "I hope to bring some innovation and change in our organization, but it takes time".

ii. "Traditional" vs "modern" - they tended to identify the old generation style as "traditional" and "conservative", and the young generation style as "modern".

iii. Maintenance vs Change - The older group emphasized "maintenance"; the younger group stressed "change".

iv. Experience vs Education - The old generation achieved through hardship and experience; the young generation achieved through education.

v. Personal vs role identification

When talking about their organization, the old interviewees identified "I", "my uncle", "my friends", "my son" and "my wife" etc. which was more "personal" and "interpersonal" based. The young interviewees used "my organization", "my department", "my staff", "my boss" even when the boss was the father, which was more "role" based.

As a result of these observations, the actual sample group chosen consisted of three of each age group (i.e. 30-49, and 50-70). The purpose was to have equal representation of two generations, and most importantly to include different experiences and perspectives of Chinese management.

b. Relationship was critical with Chinese interviewees.

Most of the interviewees were not very comfortable with the method of unstructured interview and were not very receptive about academic research when the researcher called them initially to explain the research purpose. However, after the first meeting, they seemed to be more comfortable than anticipated with the unstructured interview. Two of them even commented that "the interview was much better than questionnaire because it allowed elaboration and was more contextual".

Most of the interviewees asked about the researcher's family background, schools attended, languages spoken and her past working experience in Singapore. It was observed that the personal sharing and information exchange was helpful for their disclosure in many cases.

Some of the interviewees invited the researcher to have dinner with their family, or wanted to introduce the researcher to their wife or children. This kind of personal invitation was usually a symbol of acceptance and inclusion.

c. Participant Observation was not a well received methodology among Chinese organizations.

The original idea of the research methodology was to do an ethnographic study in a Chinese organization. When the idea was proposed to the interviewees, it was rejected politely by all of them. "It is strange to have an outside observer in the family", said one of the interviewees.

d. Receptivity of interview and observation

Most of the interviewees felt more comfortable with, and therefore preferred, the method of interview rather than observation. "There is nothing much for you to see actually, but I can tell you what I know". "My

employees would be very curious of your presence in the office. It may not be a good idea for you to hang around. But you will be welcome to talk to them after our conversation". The rejection of the observation method had implication on how a Chinese manager manages an outsider and indirectly suggested how they view the work setting.

e. Tape-recording

Most of the interviewees were not comfortable with the idea of tape-recording. It was seen as 'political', according to one of the interviewees. However, some interviewees allowed taped recording after the first meeting when they understood the purpose of the research and felt comfortable in the interview process.

f. Language

Among the eight interviewees, six spoke in Mandarin, some with a little bit of dialects, and two in English. For English-speaking interviewees, they usually reviewed less of their personal history. They used less Chinese metaphors but more "management language", such as "Scientific management"; "management is to get things done"; "organizational structure", etc.

In contrast, the Chinese-speaking interviewees tended to use more Chinese metaphors such as 一诺千金 (A Promise (worth or meant) a thousand golds); 开源节流 (Open the source (of water), save the flow (of water)).

Based on the observation, Chinese was chosen as the main language in the actual interviews for the purpose of grasping the Chinese punctuation of experience. Interview results was translated into English in the analysis.

#### g. Interview Questions (Appendix D)

Most of the interviewees preferred a 'question and answer' type of interview. Therefore, some open questions helped in guiding the interview. It was observed that "personal experience" seemed to be the key word to help open the door of the interviewee's mind.

The interview questions listed in Appendix D were only the guides. The crucial skill of the interviewer was to flow with the interview process.

### Research Design

#### 1. Sample (Appendix B)

Qualitative research calls for a flexible research design. Neither the number nor type of respondents was specified beforehand. The researcher started out with a general idea of what people to interview and how to find them, but was willing to change course after the initial interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

It was also difficult to determine how many people to interview in a qualitative study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested theoretical sampling as a guide for selecting people to interview. In theoretical sampling the actual number of "cases" studied is relatively unimportant. What is important is the potential of each "case" to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area topic being studied.

Based on the preliminary study, the researcher found different types of interviewees who were able to uncover the different range of perspectives in Chinese management that were interesting in light of the research questions. As a result, the researcher decided to include two groups of interviewees, old (50-70 years old) and young generation (30-49 years old) and those from Chinese owned organizations.

The Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one of the biggest Chinese associations, had

provided a list of local Chinese organizations in Singapore. The Training Director of the association recommended several interviewees whom he felt would be appropriate for this research. The researcher approached them and selected six to be the interviewees. Four out of the six interviewees participated in the preliminary study (C. H. T.F. and T.EB.). These were the four from the local family business. They were kept in the actual sample. The other two were known through these four interviewees. One was the son of T.F., and the other one was the brother of T.EB.

These six interviewees were selected under four conditions:

- a. They were male and belonged to Chinese ethnic group, aged between 30-70;
- b. They were from Chinese family background, preferably Chinese educated;
- c. They were presently holding top management or executive position in Chinese- owned organizations.
- d. They were receptive to an open interview and willing to share their experience.



The following list describes the sample group, including their code name, age group and their organization

<u>Code Name</u>	<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Organization</u>
1. T.S. (Son)	30-49	Foodstuffs
2.. T.F. (Father)	50-69	Foodstuffs
3. T.YB. (Younger brother)	30-49	Garment
4. T.EB. (Elder brother)	50-70	Garment
5. H.	50-69	Timber
6. C.	30-49	Commodities

Among the six interviewees, three belonged to the old generation, aged between 50-70, the first generation of Singaporeans; and three belonged to the young generation, aged between 30-49. The first group was composed mostly of immigrants from China, and the second group was Singaporean born Chinese. On the basis of the preliminary study, these groups appeared to have, to a degree, different outlooks in life and experience in organization. The purpose of such a combination of ages was to avoid bias from a particular generation, and more importantly, to find out their common and/or different cultural values and perception of Chinese management.

Among the six interviewees, two were related as father and son (No. 1 and 2) who worked in the same organization; two were related as brothers (No. 3 and

4) who also worked in the same organization. The other two, one belonged to the older generation and the other one to the younger generation.

Top managers were selected because, as described in the literature, they were usually the founder, the owner, the major shareholder, the executive (Asian Business, 1980). They were involved in all parts of activities and played a central role in their Chinese organizations.

As indicated in the list above, the other common characteristic was that the six interviewees were all male as Chinese family businesses are still male dominated in Singapore.

The six interviewees were from local Chinese organizations which were mostly family owned. They were mostly the founder, the second generation of the founder, or the major shareholders of the organizations. "Family oriented" was described as one of the significant characteristics of Chinese organizations in the literature (Redding, 1982; Chang, 1985; Hsu, 1984).

Since the sample size was small in this research, controlling on age group and keeping the focus on local Chinese organization was an attempt to gather the

richest data on Chinese perception of management. Foreign-investment controlled companies with local management and government-owned organizations were excluded in this study based on the result of the preliminary study and literature which suggested that managers in these organizations showed different experience and perception of management.

Although the types of family business was not a particular criteria for the sample selection, an effort was attempted to include certain major local Chinese business (Chng, 1978). This resulted in the inclusion of furniture, garments, foodstuffs and commodities in the sample group.

## 2. Information Collection Procedure

The information collection procedure was structured in four phases:

### Phase 1 - Rapport building

As relationship was critical in the accessibility to Chinese managers, rapport building was important at the beginning phase. In this phase, the interview was open-ended and free-flowing. The conversation was personalized, such as sharing family and educational background. Intellectual and academic language was avoided.

In this phase, the researcher encouraged each interview to generate a list of themes or issues that reflected their knowledge and experience of Chinese management.

#### Phase 2 - Indepth Interview

Information collected from the first phase was partially analyzed. The language or metaphors used or which evolved in the interviewees' description were sorted into coherent groups. Interviewees were asked to give more examples and cases to elaborate the language and metaphors that they had previously used and that initially appeared to be common to all interviewees and for the three in their age group.

Interviewees were also asked to draw pictures or diagrams to describe their image and perception of some management situations or concepts.

#### Phase 3 - Cross-check and verify with the interviewees

All information collected was preliminarily analyzed. The researcher cross-checked with each interviewee to clarify and verify the information he provided. In addition, interviewees also provided information gathered from other interviewees to cross-check, verify and validate their responses. The researcher showed appreciation to the interviewees

and reassured confidentiality of the information that they had provided. The dissertation will be made accessible to them upon request.

### 3. Indepth-Interview

#### a. Time and place

Two to three interviews were conducted for each interviewee. The interviews were conducted in an informal setting or in the interviewee's office as agreed upon by the researcher and interviewee. Interviewees were assured of their right about whether or not to answer the questions. Confidentiality was also assured.

#### b. Language

Most interviews were conducted in Mandarin or Chinese dialects. The reasons were: a. Most interviewees probably speak only Chinese; b. Chinese language itself is very metaphorical. It is more able to portray the images of Chinese people's mind and experience. The preliminary study showed that Chinese speaking interviewees used a lot of Chinese metaphors compared to the English speaking interviewees. Four out of six interviewees spoke in Mandarin, two spoke in English.

The use of Chinese language in interviews implied translation difficulty in the analysis. Experts in Chinese-English translation were consulted in overcoming this difficulty.

c. Interview Questions (Appendix D)

A list of interview questions was generated to guide the interview process.

d. Tape-Recording

Interviewees were asked for permission to tape the interview on each occasion. Most of the interviewees gave permission for the tape-recording.

e. Anonymity

Pseudonyms were used. All respondents were each assigned a code name. The purpose was to assure confidentiality and to avoid problems of embarrassment, legal problems and self-aggrandizement.

f. Final Say

The interviewees were given an opportunity to comment and give feedback regarding the researcher's understandings and conclusions about the interviews. This is believed to have increased trust in the researcher-interviewee relationship.

g. Journal

A detailed journal was maintained systematically and consistently in the data collection. The journal included several elements:

- i). It contained an outline of topics discussed in each interview. It helped to keep track of what had been covered, to go back for reference and to follow up something that the interview had said;
- ii). It contained the researcher's comments on the interview situations, the place, time, setting, non-verbal behaviors and conversation outside the interview situations.
- iii). It contained the researcher's feelings and interpretations, which was an important source of understanding. In qualitative research, the researcher was likely to share feelings and perspectives with the interviewees. It was important to record the researcher's reactions, feelings, emerging ideas and interpretation from the interviews. The comments were valuable in the research analysis.

#### 4. Analytic Procedure

The analysis, which is going to be presented in Chapter Four, Five and Six, abides by the following procedure. There will be four major parts to the analysis.



a. Organizing and Presenting the Information Collected

This part basically focuses on organizing, managing, and presenting the information collected in close alignment to the interviewees' views and language. Tapes of all the interviews were transcribed into Chinese, and translated into English. A research consultant from the National University of Singapore, and a student from the Linguistic department, University of Massachusetts were both bilingual and provided assistance in the translation. Every attempt was made to maintain the richness and fullness of the Chinese expressions in the translation process. The analysis of the information collected was based on both English and Chinese versions of transcription to avoid misinterpretation in the process of translation.

The information collected are presented in six "stories" as described by the six interviewees. Each story has its own flow yet shares some common themes. The purpose of presenting the "stories" is to provide readers original pictures painted by the interviewees with little interpretation of the researcher. The researcher's role was to organize the information collected and present it in a systematic and clear format.

b. Making Sense of the information collected

This part focuses on the comparison and contrast of the information collected and explores the different insights and meanings implicit in the description. Six scenes are presented to highlight the similarities and differences among the respondents on Chinese management; to compare Western and Chinese management; to show the dilemma of the two generations' perspectives; and to identify metaphors and meta-metaphor that capture the meanings underlying Chinese management as revealed by the interviewees.

c. Interpretation and Synthesis

The final part was to summarize and conclude the research findings and explore its implications for Chinese managers, educators and researchers. In this last part of the analysis, the researcher used an "artistic" or "interpretive" approach (Wacker, 1981) in which there was an intuitive attempt to synthesize the data showing the relations among individual's construct systems. A meta-metaphor (Smith and Simmons, 1983) emerged which provided inner links among the metaphors that were mapped to give meaning to the context. The synthesis of the information was a highly subjective task of the researcher.

#### d. Conclusions and Implications

There are three parts in the conclusions: The first part summarizes the research purpose and method; The second part summarizes the research findings; The final part explains the findings in relation to the literature; and explores the implications of the findings in connection with the development of Chinese management theory and future research study.

#### Epistemological Issues

There were some epistemological issues in this research study that should be addressed here. Referring back to the question in the Introduction: Who defines whose experience on what bases with what ends? The epistemological problems encountered in this study were:

1. Being in a multi-cultural society, can the Chinese managers in Singapore represent Chinese?
2. Can they claim their management as "Chinese management" due to the history of British colonization, "Americanization" and "Japanization" in the process of industrialization and modernization of the country?
3. Can the research methodology, adopted primarily from the West with the academic constraints, be able to reveal the Chinese experience?

4. Will the English translation reflect the Chinese mind and experience?
5. Is the study serving the Western academic audience or the Chinese organizational members in Asia?

Nobody can give precise answers to these issues. These issues had already been discussed, to some extent, in chapter one. However, they should be kept in mind throughout the whole study. The interpretations and implications of the research findings should take into consideration these issues.

For issue 1 and 2, it is assumed in this study that Singaporean Chinese claim their management as "Chinese management", although the Singaporean Chinese management is operated in a multicultural society with a strong influence from the West and Japan.

Issues 3 and 4 reflects the limitations of this study as well as many other research studies in Asian countries. On one hand, there is a need to discover and develop Chinese management in Asian countries. Western scientific organizational theory is well developed and available as an instrument in understanding and studying organization and improving organization productivity. Therefore, these models have been greatly adopted in Asian countries. On the other hand, it is

often debated that Western scientific organizational theory is not able to encompass the essence of the Asian organization and management. It is a dilemma faced by Asian as well as many developing countries. Can Chinese develop their research model based on their own mode of inquiry? It is yet to be found out. This study, to a great extent, is adopting the Western research methodology with certain academic constraints. It is not the ideal preference for a study of Chinese management. However before any alternative inquiry method is developed, adopting the Western research methodology is necessary and inevitable.

The belief in a universal harmony and unity is the basic tenet of the Chinese cultural mentality. Their habit is to see things as a harmonious whole; their mind is one of common sense and reasonableness. What is true does not need to be proven. Many scholars, both Western and Chinese, called the Chinese way of thinking intuitive, feminine, even primitive. Formal reasoning and deductive science are not necessary, and therefore, not well developed in Chinese culture. The methods of intuition and contemplation became the sole trustworthy modes of inquiry in Chinese culture. It is precisely this reason that its scientific methodology has never

progressed for long beyond the initial natural history stage of "scientific" development. The reliance on intuition restricted its development. Many Chinese scholars have recognized the need to develop and expand its mode of inquiry by learning from the Western science. The dilemma faced by scientists, writers, and researchers are the questions of 'how' and 'how much'. These questions clearly apply in the case of refining Chinese management.

## C H A P T E R   I V

### PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Introduction

Indepth interviews were conducted with six managers in local Singaporean Chinese organizations. As described in Chapter 3, each interviewee was interviewed two or three times using unstructured interview techniques. The interviewees were asked open-ended general questions (Appendix D) and were encouraged to respond in any way they wished. They were then asked to elaborate with specific examples. Each interview lasted from 70-120 minutes.

After all the interviews were done, the researcher then reviewed the transcripts to identify the themes and categorize them in an effort to allow the subject's frame of interpretation to be revealed in a more sequential and systematic way. All interviews of each interviewee were blended and reorganized. The framework for categorization was certainly subjective but central to the analysis in Chapter Five.

The interviewees' descriptions of what they think and how they feel are presented here as six "Chinese



manager's stories". Subheadings highlight the themes or concepts. There are five common themes that cut across all interviewees. These are: 1. The traditional Chinese management is..... 2. The Western management and Chinese management..... 3. My organization is ..... 4. As a manager, I am ..... 5. Everyday, my job is..... There were variations among the interviewees in what they emphasized in the interviews depending on their experience in their organizations. Most of the descriptions in the stories are the original quotes from the interviews with some paraphrasing and sentences linking done by the researcher.

A methodological problem was encountered in the organization and management of the information collected. For the purpose of a systematic presentation and comparison, some organizing and paraphrasing had to be done by the researcher. The researcher had to constantly decide how neat and clean the data should be presented while also retaining the uniqueness of each respondents description. Each of the interviewee had his own flow of thoughts and his own contradictions. The choice of how "neat and clean" and how "repe~~a~~titive and contradicting" the information collected should be

presented was certainly a subjective judgement of the researcher.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the information collected in the interviews as accurately as possible to the views and language used of the respondents. A format of "story" is chosen for the presentation in order to retain the uniqueness of each description generated by the respondents. All the stories provide a context for understanding the analysis in Chapter five. Since not all the description in the interviews were analyzed, only those that are relevant to the research focus will be presented in this chapter.

## STORY 1 : T.S. (Son of T.F. Young age group)

### INTRODUCTION

"I am one of the successors in my organization. My father is the Managing Director. I used to be the Plant manager. Recently I am promoted to be the General Manager. I was all along Chinese educated. After finishing my National Service, I went to England to study Food Science. I came back about three four years ago and joined the company".

"Basically I still think Chinese, be it values and norms, in terms of personal life and sometimes in terms of behavior. I think in terms of behaviors I am still very Chinese, and the way I think also. But the way I work, I am trying to implement the Western management style but not moving too far away from the Chinese management".

"Our organization is 100% Chinese type of management style. What we emphasize is obligation. It is the family relationships. These relationships play a lot. Whether a person is good, whether one's performance is better than the other, this is not the question. Everything is relationship. The management style becomes ad-hoc basis. Any problems come out, they solve it. Everything goes on, nobody question it. That means we only solve problem when it arises. That is the old generation. This is what we see. So it is totally different from what we have learned in school, what we think about other organizations".

"The first generation, they are very typical Chinese. They have that kind of value, norms from China, which generation passed down to generation, never open to the door. And it is because of this family concern, that if your second generation is no good, then when you die, organization dies. If the second generation is better than the first, you grow. If you look around Singapore, how many organizations that practice Chinese management have become successful?"

THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS.....

A. IT IS THE LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS THAT COUNT

"Most of the staff here have been with the company since it first started 34 years ago. Among friends they formed the business. Then they employed employees. Those workers who have been working for them, are still working for us now. It is that kind of long term relationships that count. They feel that they are in one family which I think is a good thing".

B. THERE IS NO RANKING

"There is no ranking, unlike many of the other organizations. Over here we know only the bosses. Other than that no one else. All levels are equal. It is that kind of situation for the older generation".

C. THEY FEEL OBLIGATED

"Those workers feel that they are part of the family. They feel obligated. Likewise, for the management, they feel obligated to take care of them".

D. FAMILY CONCERN

"Everything is at a micro level. It just stays in the family concern. Ad-hoc, as I said. Whatever is required, you do".

E. POWER CORE

"I think I told you before concerning the power core. It is right in the centre. Very limited number of people; either the boss himself, or falls within the family. They all started that way. Once it branches out, also the same thing. Any typical Chinese organization, the key personnels are all the family members, or belong to the bosses themselves. I notice a lot of the Chinese organizations working that way".

F. WE PLAY A LOT IN EMOTION

"I have a salesforce. The highest education was 'A' level, minimum no education at all. One of my uncles. He has the worst performance. I can't change him. I am only hoping that he retires slowly. That is a problem. We play a lot on emotion. Looking at the

background, you can imagine how difficult it would be for us to sell the new concept to them".

#### G. THERE IS NO CLEAR CUT OBJECTIVE

"It is easier to work with an objective. We do not have a clear cut objective here. Everybody work for their obligation...for the boss".

"This year I ask them what kind of objectives must we have next year? Nothing. They said I was too ambitious. So at the end we still do not have a formal objective. I can only tell myself what am I going to achieve in 1987. I have no choice. I cannot work without direction. They are not providing me with a direction. So I must find one myself. That is the only way. If I succeed, they smile. If I fail, I think they are going to hit me hard. That is why I have a lot of complaints about Chinese management. So much complaints. I believe such things do not exist in any of the Western organization".

#### H. THERE IS NO ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

"We go to management classes. In the Western countries, they emphasize a lot on organizational chart. You don't find any Chinese organization that has an organizational chart. But the chart is the main thing, the most important thing. It all starts from there. In Western companies, organizational charts are very clear, very straight forward".

#### I. THERE IS NO PROPER PLANNING

"There is no proper planning. We can never sit down on the roundtable and say look, how do you want to perceive our sales in year 1987? What kind of programs are we going to implement? Never. Three years since I joined the company, I have been trying to practice it. So for 1987, my sales executive is supposed to give me a sales projection for the year or the sales budget because I told him I needed the budget to plan for the production. And probably, may be half a year later, I am going to tell salesmen if you could submit a copy of the projection to the sales executive to compile. If I do that, it is very easy for me to give down an instruction like that. But one big question that I have

to ask myself: When I receive the data, how reliable are they"?

#### J. DECISION IS AD-HOC BASIS

"A lot of decision making is on an ad-hoc basis. We cannot...and very changeable mood, like the weather. These people ask for 5% discount. When the boss is there, he is happy, ok give him 5% discount. The next moment, he is not happy, no, no, cannot, cannot. No principle to follow. Even if there is, it is not clear".

"So I am trying to act upon the problems that I encounter here and there become the ad-hoc basis. It becomes the management style here that solving the problems by crisis. When we have the problem, we solve it. When we do not have the problem, or it doesn't... You don't feel pain, you don't cure it".

#### K. WE DO THINGS ACCORDING TO THE INSTINCTS

"We are very classical Chinese. We do things according to the instincts. You don't support it with facts. Now we are trying to change. Also when it gets bigger, it is harder to control. So you need some kind of mechanism to help you to make decision. And their time is over. If I copy them a cost-benefit analysis, nobody will understand. My bosses will not understand".

#### L. MEETING IS ON AN AD-HOC BASIS

"Another classical example. Suddenly there is a meeting. I am never informed ahead of time. Now, all of a sudden, they ask me to join the meeting. It is always like that".

"We don't have a regular meeting. But now I insist that any meeting to be held, especially when it involves more people, agenda must be given. Time must be given. It must be at least three days notice. I have made it clear".

#### M. PROMOTION BECAUSE OF HIS EXPERIENCE AND GOOD PERSONALITY

"My sales executive. He is not a marketing man. He is only 'A' level. He was promoted because he was an



order taker before. He knows the distribution network here very well. That is why he was promoted. And he has a very good personality. That is why he was promoted. That was the criteria, which if you were to change it totally to a western company, you know the criteria is totally different".

#### N. THE DESIGNATION HAS NO MEANING

"The designation to us has no meaning. It is what they made clear. That is for external identification. So it is very family type. You cannot say that I am more senior or more level higher than you are. I am a manager, I have to get my hands dirty sometimes. In fact very often that happens. We cannot say that this is not my job, neither can I deny that this is not my job. So whatever happens you just have to do it".

#### O. CHIN-CHAY, CHIN-CHAY ATTITUDE

"Ever since we started the company, there is no clear function, because they have a concept that chin-chay chin-chay, I do a little bit, you do a little bit. Let's not be too fussy about the job. It all started from there. Even thirty years now, still like that. That is why we need to do some very constructive changes".

#### P. IT IS SUPPRESSING A PERSON'S TALENT

"I believe many of the Chinese organizations here are that....you plan, you decide what to do, and then you tell certain people to do it accordingly. In another words, we become people that execute the instructions. We don't plan. We don't think. We just execute it. I think that is the main difference, which is not very good, very unhealthy, I think. It is sort of suppressing a person's talent. And that way we cannot tell whether a person is good or not. I can only tell to a certain limit that whether he is responsible, whether his reaction is fast enough, and that is all. I cannot fully explore his potential. That is pretty sad".

#### Q. THEY ARE AFRAID OF CHANGE

"So they have this kind of planted concept in their mind that cannot change. Once it is there, it



must be there forever. They are very afraid of changing".

"We have the promotion. No doubt, it costs a lot but it is very effective. Comparing to circling round the problem. Today change just a little bit. The second day change the other part. It takes another 20 years and we are still there".

"That is the concept that I have in mind. I must keep improving. If I am not improving, others will be improving. I am going backward. You must keep going. That is something that they do not think about it".

#### R. WE ARE NOT OPEN MINDED

"I think the other difficulty in the Chinese company is the management itself. We are not too open minded. In my personal opinion is that our organization here, we lack of specialized people. Everything is very ambiguous.... everywhere overlapped. So that slows down the management decision a little bit".

"We have a very close concept, very narrow minded, to protect the company. We are not as open. I think that is a main difference. It is...I supposed all these is because of the culture, different way of thinking. Americans are very open minded. I believe. Chinese, on the other hand, too extreme".

#### S. THERE ARE A LOT OF FREEDOM AND PRIVILEGES, AND BETTER WELFARE

"There are a lot of freedom. A lot of privileges in Chinese management. More family oriented. More family concern. Better welfare. Of course it works very well when it is small. For example it never used to be our philosophy or practice to retrench. When we bought a machine. I kept twelve workers. That involves more than sixteen thousand dollars of pay roll a year. They are more relaxed now. We keep them because it is not our policy to retrench. I have an old worker here. He is not doing anything, drawing one thousand two hundred dollars a month. What does he do? He does a little of sales. He does not deserve one thousand two hundred dollars per month. Apart from that what does he do? Sitting in the office complaining. Sometimes when he nags nags nags, he affects everybody's morale. You know

(Ei lao Mai Lao). That is terrible. As far as I am concern, you are old, I have no obligation to keep you until you die. The bosses, yes. They are the owners of this company. They must work here. They must come here everyday".

#### T. ONE THING GOOD ABOUT CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS THE SENSE OF BELONGING IN A BIG FAMILY

"What they want to learn is the welfare. Rhey are trying to implement the profit sharing. Make sure that it becomes a family. A big family. A sense of belonging. That is one thing good about Chinese. And I think that is the only good thing about it, or one of the very little things. This is what I can identify".

#### U. ANOTHER GOOD POINT IS THAT IN BAD TIMES, PEOPLE PUT THEMSELVES TOGETHER

"Another good point on Chinese management. In bad time, people put themselves together. And there is no union. Can be very assured that family concern, there is no union. If everybody has the right attitude, sense of belonging to the company. Even in the bad time, they can pull up, push through the bad time very easily. Well, Western management, they are still taking a lot of problems in the union. I think this is again another one of the very little advantages found in the Chinese management".

### CHINESE MANAGEMENT AND WESTERN MANAGEMENT .....

#### A. PERFORMANCE VS RELATIONSHIP

"In Western management, we always believe that we judge on the person's performance, in terms of their performance. In the Chinese management, you depend a lot on the relationships".

#### B. OPEN DOOR VS CLOSE DOOR

"And in terms of Chinese management, we are very close door. We never want to announce or to show people that what we have achieved. In Western management you always tell people what you have achieved. It becomes a very proud kind of issue that you announce to public that you have achieved something. So that people will have

more confidence in you. Chinese is more humble in their way of life. That also goes into their style of management. You have achieved something, you keep it very quiet. May be as a Chinese, we believe that it is no point to announce everything that you have achieved. On the other hand, what we feel is that people try very hard to so-called steal the 'know-how' that we have developed, which has become a very sensitive issue".

#### C. CHANGE VS STATIC

"But as far as I concern, I must tell myself, every year I must have changes, I must improve myself. This is Western concept. Chinese concept, as I know, they remain static, stay there. They achieve something, shut it there. And they hope it lasts forever. I think that is a very significant difference between Western and Chinese. And I think I have mentioned to you last time that you look around Singapore. Those people who never changed into Western management style, or never merged or implement part of it, they grow very slow. Those who remain the Chinese style, they died".

#### D. SELECTIVE VS ALL GOOD

"Another classical example is the collection. Every sales meeting, we always have to chase the salesman for payment, which is a very bad practice. They always give excuses. Whereas actually our credit period is only 30 days. Traditional. Never change. They didn't want to change. And these people are very afraid of offending their clients. My standing point is that I rather lose two or three bad clients, and concentrate more on the good ones. Our end result might be, most likely would be better than maintaining all equal clients, because I don't think this is a right concept. Chinese is 'everything is good'. Westernized is selective. That is what I believe".

#### E. RULES VS FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

"Because Western management has no feelings. That is what I believe. They have no feelings at all. There are rules and norms that you have to follow, and that is. And it is set by the top management. And that top management has been changing every time, whereas the Chinese management, the top management stay there all the time. Our major competitor in chilli sauce and

tomato ketchup. They are very strict in collecting things. 30 days mean 30 days. How come they can practice that? Why we cannot do that? Feelings, emotions again. That is Chinese value".

F. WESTERNIZED MANAGEMENT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL; CHINESE MANAGEMENT WILL EVENTUALLY FINISH AND COLLAPSE....

"Three soysauce factories in Singapore closed down in two years. Why? Because the second generation is never interested. Secondly, the first generation did not practice the long-term planning. They did not implement properly stage by stage kind of planning for the future. And the third thing, they never change their style. For 20 years, they are remaining the same. So the soysauce industry as a whole, there are more than 20 manufacturers in Singapore, but there are only a few big ones. All these big ones, who are they? Y.Y.S. co., export oriented. They are practicing American management style now, or may be merging part of it, because they still have a very strong Chinese characteristics there being family owned. Ourselves, we are somewhere in between. The local market leader T.H. co. He is a dictatorship but he is a slightly special case because he also learns something from Taiwan which also is in a changing stage. He himself being a very successful man, very serious, very particular, very fussy. May be that is how he grows. But the way I look at him is that he has reached his limit. What would happen if he, for instance cannot work anymore? What is going to happen in his company? Finished, Collapsed. That is how I look at it because he has no successor. And he depends a lot on outsiders".

WHY THE OTHER COMPANIES ARE SUCCESSFUL? .....BECAUSE THE SON BROUGHT BACK WITH HIM THE WESTERN CONCEPTS.....

"Another example is Y.H.S. company. Family business. It all started from a family business. Why are they so successssful? If the eldest son of the eldest director, who is the chairman of Y.H.S. now. He went oversea for his education. He came back. He brought back with him the Western concepts. What is supposed to be the right management, whether is a blend or both, I do not know. But certainly I observe that the major changes was when they had the distribution right from Pepsi Cola. Once they gain that, they sent

people to PepsiCola for training, marketing, management, production, everything. And since then, they adopt that kind of management style. They adopt that kind of attitudes, production skills, marketing skills. Without that turning point, I do not think they can be a successful public company in Singapore. There is on other organization that follows their footstep at this moment".

OUR ORGANIZATION IS .....

A. WE ARE SOMEWHERE INBETWEEN.....

"I look at ourselves, it is some where in between. If there is no us, the second generation in the company, we always remain the same. We will not be here today in this place. We will not be able to give people a good image. No doubt our product is very good. There are people who produce good product, but they stay very small, still very traditonal".

"We are in between. We are not small, but we are far from big. We are struggling to grow. Actually this period, when I look around, management is the turning point for us. In these two years, we have determined a firm direction for the company. We have been trying hard to perceive ourselves, to look forward for the next five years. How do we want to project this organization? Of course we are far from there. Still working on a cycling".

B. IN THE PAST, WE DON'T HAVE BUDGET, FORECAST, COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS. WE DO NOT PLAN MARKETING STRATEGY, NEVER SPEND MONEY IN ADVERTISEMENT, NO PROPER PLANNING BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE A RIGHT PERSON.....

"In the past, we do not have such things as budget. We do not have such things as forecast. We do not have such things as cost-benefit analysis. We do not plan a strategy on how we want to introduce new product or new concept into the market. We never spend money in any advertisement. How can that be successful? I keep telling them that we must have a proper planning".

"We do not have such a person called marketing manager. They always have a very wrong concept. Marketing is sales. To me marketing is marketing, sales



is sales. All sales force is not equivalent to the marketing force. To them mean the same thing. We do not have a budget. What we are doing now is that when there is a competition, we just dump, we don't care the consequences. We based a lot on experience. Oh, last year, what did we do, so this year we follow, which is not very fitting, not a good impact on the marketing. I think this is very wrong. Even now I cannot influence that".

C. THIS ORGANIZATION NEEDS THE RIGHT TYPE OF PEOPLE.....

"This organization needs the right type of people to help. Really. I must admit that there are many things that I cannot copewith. For example I am not from the accounting discipline. I do not know the accounting principle. I do read. But that is in the book but I do not know the practice. But very fortunate that I have a very efficient very effective accounts clerk. She is very good, very fantastic. I am depending a lot on her. I really have the full confidence in her. Because we are able to use the right kind of person. We must know, the top people must know how to us the right kind of person to do the right kind of job".

D. WE WANT TO GET RID OF THE CHINESE IMAGE, WE WANT TO TELL THE ENGLISH EDUCATION PEOPLE THAT WE ARE A MODERN COMPANY

"Another very classical example here practice here is that I supposed if you look at our company, you perceive it as a Chinese company. Chinese family, traditional product. If you don't look at the packaging, you can imagine how it is going to look like. We are trying to get rid of this image. We want to tell the public, especially English educated people that we are a modern factory. We produce good product".

"I am having a very strong resistance from my sales force. I engage consultant. I spend so much time resigning the packaging. When I sold the design to them, nobody agreed. Because we change the design completely. The salesmen said the provision shops do not want it, because they cannot recognize the product. I said that is not a problem. It is because the consumer are not awared. You people are supposed to be salesmen and are supposed to convince the provision

shops. You don't just go there to take orders. You are supposed to sell the concept. They cannot understand and they won't do it. Because they are spoiled. For ten years they have been working in this company. They thought it is very easy. Our turn-over is very high. That is very fortunate for them. They become the born lucky kind of salesperson".

#### E. WHAT I WANT IS AN EFFECTIVE RESULT

"If you as a boss, giving me authority, I am holding this position. I have certain kind of privileges, power, and authority. As long as it falls within my job respect, I must hold the responsibility. Therefore I make the decision. You don't have to keep close to me observe how I do it. Because what you want is the result. When my subordinate work, I don't care how they do it. What I want is an effective result. If they did something wrong, yes, correct them. I keep an eye on them. But I don't interfere them. That is the worst. Certain freedom to work. And that is the way to find out whether the person is good or not good".

"For example in a very classic electronic company. You are a production manager. You have a certain job description, stated very clearly in your appointment letter. You know what you are supposed to do. Other division managers cannot interfere you. They cannot tell you what to do. You can turn them off. It is very clear cut. Whereas here, same production manager, he is accountable to the directors, he is accountable to the managers, he is accountable to the plant manager, everybody. Everybody who is more senior than him. It is very difficult to draw a line. A person can easily say that I am a senior, you have to listen to me. If I am a director, you must listen. You know that kind of perception in the Chinese organization. It is very unclear".

#### F. WE HAVE A GREAT POTENTIAL

"As far as I look at our company, I believe that we have a great potential, both in local market and foreign market. The question is how are we going to do it? If we remain Chinese, we stop there. But if we being Western, totally westernized, may be we won't find any old workers around here. We won't find any old directors here. We kicked them out long time ago".



## WHAT TO WESTERNIZE? WHAT TO REMAIN CHINESE?

"That is why I find there is more disadvantage than advantage in Chinese management. I only want to collect the good ones and implement here".

### A. KEY PERSONNEL REMAIN FAMILY CONCEPT

"All the key personnel, all the people still remain the family concept, that is Chinese".

"The key personnel will still have to remain in our family concern. So that is Chinese. I think that has to remain. If it is an outsider, what is going to happen to the client when this person leaves the company? Our clients will be disturbed. So I believe that the important posts still have to remain as family concern. But of course there is a risk to take if this particular person is no good. But we can make it up, by employing a good assistant. Hopefully we can get someone to do. Because when this assistant leaves, we still haven't got so much to lose. But if totally dependent on outsider, once he leaves, you finish. Our account, full-time account, handled by account clerk. She is an outsider. She has been here for six years. Very efficient, very good. But I have some concern. What is going to happen when she resigns? If she is my sister, would she resign? No. If she is my sister and she has to resign, I am going to tell her can you resign six months later until I found a replacement. She has that kind of obligation. And that is something that must remain as Chinese concern. If it is my own family personnel, I have no worry at all, no concern at all, as long as she performs her job".

### B. WELFARE REMAIN CHINESE WAY

"The welfare for the workers, which I think still has to improve, that has to remain Chinese".

### C. RETIREMENT FOLLOW WESTERN

"Retirement, no. That has to follow the Western style. As far as I am concern, I pay you the compensation. You earned. By your consideration, we pay you compensation. So we are fair and square. That I think we have to be westernized. Otherwise we owe them for the whole life. That is not true. Because Chinese

believe that we owe them for the whole life. That is not good".

#### D. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE CHANGE TO WESTERN

"And right now we haven't had a very clear function, very clear organizational structure that mean Chinese. When can we Westernized? We do not know. I am not that confident".

#### E. PERSONNEL BE SOMEWHERE INBETWEEN WESTERN AND CHINESE

"We have a personnel officer that is something that you don't find in Chinese organization. We do have. My personnel officer does not strictly function as the personnel matter. That is more than that. Personnel in the Western organization, they play a very important role. But here he only functions as something like a personnel clerk. I think directly he is helping me in monitoring the labor situation, doing the recruitment for me. So politically he is actually acting as my secretary. Adjust a lot of my routine work. He only consult me on decision. Once I told him my decision, my view, he executes it on the plan. So that is somewhere inbetween Westernize and Chinese".

#### F. SALES AND DISTRIBUTION SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

"The sales and distribution style very Chinese at this moment. That remains Chinese. When will we change? I don't know. May be one day we can westernize it. In fact the next phase of changing will be introducing the product cost into the invoices. But the product name still remain Chinese. So that is Chinese. I believe we have to change one day because a lot of provision shops, they are also family concern. They prefer to read Chinese. And right now we are collecting information from a lot of competitors, Western companies on how to organize, how to change, how to do invoice, how they actually do the sales and distribution etc. We want to study the whole picture so that gradually we can westernize. I think the whole project is going to take about two years. At this moment I am not sure whether it will remain Chinese or westernize. I got the strong feelings that it will become in-between".

#### G. SALESFORCE BE WESTERNIZED

"The salesmen are not pushing. They are supposed to do the sales. They just collect. I want to monitor for another half a year to see the changes. Another things with Chinese style is always ad-hoc. Western style, 1987, what kind of sales and promotion program I am going to have? They already have in mind. Everybody has this in mind. Chinese, No. Oh, the market now come down like that, let's have a promotion. I think this is no good. So that is something again need to be changed".

#### H. FAMILY CONTROL BUT WESTERN MANAGEMENT.

"It is still family centered. Because as far as it is full public listing, as far as I control about 9% in this company. I control a whole lot. Because in a full public listing, nobody can get more than nine ten percent of share. Family control but Western management. This is the best way to raise the capital from the public, and it is the cheapest form".

#### I. LOCALIZED AUTHORITY

"What is going to happen in the future if it becomes a very localize authority. For example now it becomes a very clear picture now that I carry a lot of authority and power. I think I have a lot of power here in this company. I have very influential power. How come? I don't know. Is it because different from my cousin, or is it because they are willing to comply and follow? I do not know. Any instructions that I carry out as long as it doesn't belong to any of the families, they follow. Even this family, the wife of the director, even the director himself, they follow the instruction. As far as they told me they said they are depending a lot on me. They said they believe, they have confidence in me. That is why they are willing to comply".

CHINESE? WESTERN? HOW GOOD IS GOOD AND HOW BAD IS BAD?  
IT IS YET TO BE KNOWN

"Because we have a traditional work force. They are good in certain areas but they are weak in others. Like the weak points are the directors have no strict guidelines, ad-hoc basis. Today I give you 5 % discount. Another day I give the other 10%. So it becomes very massive. That is Chinese way. It is good because we give individual attention. That is good. What is bad is it creates a lot of mess. So how good is good and how bad is bad? It is yet to be known. To be frank, I do not know myself yet".

"It is good yet it is bad. It depends on how you take it, depends on the situation. If the person can manipulate the situation very well, he will become very successful. If I think I can manipulate the situation very well, yes, power core is very narrow. Very good because I can get a lot of work done very effectively. This is very good, no red-tape. Very effective. A lot of work can get done. That is provided you can get the right person. Now the next question is once this top person pass the peak period, the dying stage. What is going to happen? Then...like now our situation here, the power core remains in the MD. Let's say if I become the successor, the power core, the level is up this stage. It cannot go up anymore. In future it may still remain the very narrow core, but it still remains very effective, because I have the right attitude. I am the right person to do the job. Then it is so much better than the Western management because I can get the work done very effectively. Everything concern becomes the family concern. So may be everybody has the right attitude to work, the morale".

I PERCEIVE THE PROPER MANAGEMENT AS.....

A. POWER CORE REMAINS NARROW

"You know how I perceive the proper management? The power core remains narrow, especially the top management. This is Chinese. The profit sharing scheme must be implemented to make everybody belong to this family".

B. GET THE RIGHT PERSON

"Everybody, every workers, irrespective of family or non-family. Becomes under the umbrella. So instead of moving the picture out, we move inside into it. Becomes the family. We are a family here. We do not want to take advantage. This is something that we have to overcome here. Never take advantage. The power core remains narrow because if you get the right person, it is very effective, very efficient. If you spread out, it becomes slow".

#### C. CENTRALIZED.

"I still believe in centralized. That is why it is always the key person, the chairman of any organization is the most important person. It determines whether you succeed or not successful".

"I agree that he is the soul. This is what I believe. Because I have experienced it. I have seen people taking over the first generation. I have seen one Malaysian company. The son take over the business. Within five years, on the whole it takes ten years. The company had from no where becomes one of the largest production of tomato ketchup and chilli source in Malaysia just next to Maggi. This is a very successful story. One man show. Because the power core is only one top".

#### D. THE DECISION CHAIN IS SHORTER

"The decision chain is shorter. You group under it. If I am the center core. I get a picture here and I get a picture there. Digest. Instead of taking stage by stage come all the way up. Just imagine I alone controlling these three managers directly. Instead of first manager going to the second manager because the second manager has to know the picture of the first manager, and the third level manager must understand the second and the first. And then come to the top position".

#### E. PLAN FOR THE RIGHT SUCCESSOR

"It is very important that you must plan to have the right successor. And I think this is exactly what this company is doing. Western management, no. That is why some Chinese companies failed. They cannot find. That is one of the disadvantage. Always two sides, good and



bad, depending on which category you fall. So on the whole, even there are more disadvantages of Chinese management, but there are still some very good. That is why I believe that it must be blended, compromise. Maybe the question lies a lot on how to solve or how to prevent the disadvantages, the successor problem, the quality of the management problem. It all depends on those two key questions".

#### F. FAMILY MEMBERS MUST HAVE THE WESTERN CONCEPT AND ATTITUDE

"But individual in the family must have the western concept, must have that kind of Western attitude to believe in the performance reward. Otherwise it will not, I don't think it will succeed".

#### G. USE THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

"That is what I have been saying that we are going to human resource management. That is my concept of the proper management. I lower myself to talk to my worker. I never tell people that I am the manager. I keep to my workers. I get my hands dirty. Likewise I expect any other person to do that in the organization irrespective of the position. I give a title because you have a responsibility. I give a title not because you have a status".

#### H. THE MANAGER ONLY DO PLANNING AND MAKE IMPORTANT DECISION

"I believe that if I am the manager, I don't do work. I only do planning. I only make important decision. But I must have the right person to help me. And I must be able to leave them to do certain job. So that I have enough time to think the project properly".

#### I. THE MANAGER PLAN HIS OWN TIME. HE MUST BE AROUND TO FEEL THE HAPPENING

"Because I believe that I am a manager, I manage my own time. They believe that, the older generation believe that you have to be here eight to five. You must work very hard day and night. I cannot believe in that. I believe that you must have certain amount of work, amount of hours to spend here in the company. Otherwise you do not know what is happening in the

company. That is why you have to be in the company. You can still relax in the company, doing your thinking, your planning. You must be around to feel the happening".

OUR ORGANIZATION IS.....

A. OUR ORGANIZATION IS TURNING FROM SMALL TO BIG

"But may be that is because they are turning from small to a big. When they first organized themselves into a factory into a company, everybody had the job. Everybody was a general manager. Everybody was a general worker. Thirty five years ago, we considered ourselves as pretty small. But the late 10 years, we have a growth, adverage growth of at least 70%, in terms of the output. In this 10 years, the old generation cannot catch up with the output of the company. So a lot of distortion here and there, because they cannot control anymore. At least now we have the second generation here to help".

B. NEW GENERATION COME IN

"The transition only started when I came in because in the last five years, we were not able to do it because the bosses themselves had no confidence in the new comers. My cousin has been here for five years and my colleage has been here for four years. They failed to win the confidence of management because they have very bad attitude".

C. IT SEEMS THAT I AM TAKING OVER MY FATHER'S ROLE. IT WILL BE A MORE NARROW POWER CORE

"It becomes the picture now. It becomes that I am replacing him in the position. This is what I don't like to see. It becomes...next time my father retire. When I fit in this position. It becomes the same thing. I become the power core. I am not able to spread it out. No successor in a relevant post. If one day I go up to for example now I become a GM, there is no one to succeeding the Plant manager post. I have no suitable candidate. So what I take with me is the Plant manager, plus the new definition of the GM. I am going to be involved in the sales, and eventually finance. If one day I go up again, I will take everything with me again. So it becomes a even narrow core, if I don't



correct the picture. But I hope that one of these days, in the future I am going to have a production executive, who help in controlling the floor, the whole production. I need such a person to help me".

#### D. I AM VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER MANAGERS

##### 1. I WENT TO CHINESE SCHOOL, THEY WENT TO ENGLISH SCHOOL

"My difference and them is that I went to Chinese school. The other two went to English school. I speak Mandarin and Hokkien...They speak English. I speak Mandarin. I write Chinese. I speak Hokkien. I speak dialects".

##### 2. AS MANAGERS, THEY STAY HIGH UP. I DON'T

"They buy into Western concept - 'I am a manager, I behave like a manager, high up at the top. I can never bring myself down'. But I did not. That is what happened to them. They stayed very high. They never want to come down. The old people here are very fed up with them".

##### 3. FOR THEM, THE RELATIONSHIP AND FEELINGS IS NOT THERE. FOR ME, I HAVE

"The relationship and the feelings is not there. But to me, I have. Because I put in a lot of effort in this company. But to them, I don't think so. Because so many times in the management meetings, they said why don't we sell it away since we have so much management problems? I always said that no. If everybody slightly take a step back, think it over and come back to discuss again".

##### 4. I KNOW EVERY INCH ABOUT THIS COMPANY. THEY DON'T

"But I am slightly different, because in all the vocation time, I worked here in this factory. I was a production worker before, delivery man before, working the soy sauce production, cooking production, all the departments here, I was involved. At least I had some experience here and there. That is why I can adapt to the situation very quickly. I had no lap at all. When we carried this project back in 1978. I was involved

right in the first stage up to the finished stage when it was finally completed".

5. THERE IS NO SENSE OF BELONGING FOR THEM. THERE IS A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR ME

"So that is why I say next time make sure he starts from the bottom up. Otherwise they forget. May be that is part of the reason why the other two failed. May be. I don't know. I think it plays a very important part because there is no sense of belonging for them, whereas for me there is a sense of belonging because I have so much feelings for the company. If I never come to work in the factory when I was young, I don't think the feelings is there or will be there".

6. OUR THINKING IS VERY DIFFERENT

"Because I know our thinking is very different. I cannot quote you examples but our thinking is very different. Definitely I can feel it".

7. THEY PLAY SAFE. I TAKE CHALLENGE

"He dare not take the challenge. He always play save. Business is like gambling. It is a risk, calculated risk. This is what I believe. If I don't venture, I don't gain. So his attitude is that play save. Everything play safe. So we remain".

8. THEY DON'T KNOW THE HAPPENING. I DO

"For example, my cousin. He comes in at nine-thirty, sometimes at ten o'clock, leaves office at eleven o'clock, comes back in the afternoon at four thirty or four o'clock. So he doesn't know what is happening in the company. I told him many times in private conversation that you must spend a certain amount of time in the office to feel the happening here".

9. THEY DON'T ATTEND MEETINGS. I ATTEND MEETINGS

"I told him that the important meetings you have attend. Our monthly sales meeting, you must come. He never attend for the past one year".

10. I DON'T CONFRONT THEM. I CAN CONTROL MYSELF

"I can control myself very well. Because I believe that quarelling will not solve anything. This is a personal attitude, I believe".

11. I NEVER FORCE ANYBODY TO WORK. I FIND MY OWN WORK. EVERYTHING HAS TO BE 自取 ZHI FA

"I never force anybody to work. You want to do it, you do it. Because my attitude is such that you don't have to give me work. I must find work to do. I don't think I need attention. I do it. I don't wait for the bosses to give me instruction. Major steps, yes. Because it involves planning. We need to organize ourselves. Then we have to sit down to think it over, discuss it over and do it. Everything what we call 自取 (Zhi Fa). You do it yourself, not waiting for the instruction".

#### F. THE WAY I TREAT MY OWN PEOPLE

1. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERN, HE IS MY OWN RELATIVE. I STILL PLAY A LOT OF FEELINGS

"My cousin, we have different opinions, but I still play a lot of feelings because as far as I am concern, he is my own relative. If I don't support him, who is going to support him? Provided the decision is right, I support him. It might not be a very good one. It might be different from my thinking, but I still support him because as far as I am concern, he is my family member".

2. I TREAT MY SISTER VERY WELL

"Even for example my sister. I think I treat her very well. Sometimes even protect her, step over. Because my sister is very hot tempered, very impatient type whereas my personnel officer is very slow, and like a grandmother nagging a lot. That is why my sister couldn't stand him. Many times I have to resolve the conflicts for them. But at least, she follows".

#### F. THE OLD GENERATION

1. MY BOSSES

"Board of Directors consists of this director, this director MD and my uncle who is in finance. 3, 4,

MD is 1. 1,2,3,4 four directors here. He is normally involving daily routine in these two. This my uncle only involves in the finance. He is the treasurer. There is a production director. He is involved in the production".

## 2. THEY DON'T LET ME PROVE IT

"First thing, the trust. The bosses are going to tell us that I have been working for thirty years. My experience tells me that you must do this. You have nothing to say. When I try to convince them that look, you must give me a chance to prove it to you that my thinking is correct, my concept is correct. You don't let me test, you don't test me, you don't let me practice it, how do you evaluate my performance. If I can prove it to you that this scheme is going to be successful. I must sell you. I must sell you my package. If you do not want my package, I am not selling. Until now, we cannot sell them our concepts successfully".

## 3. MY STORY AND THEIR STORY WILL BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT

"Second part is the ability to accept the knowledge or the concepts. It is very different. We value one object certain way. When this picture given to them, it becomes a separate story. Just like you give them this picture ask them to write a story. My story and their story will be totally different. Totally. No way near".

## 4. MY BOSS IS MY FATHER. WHEN YOU ARE THE BOSS, YOU ARE THE BOSS

"When I told them I am going to sell the new and old together, even though the product is identical..... I cannot get the concept across, because my boss is my father. He is protecting me. He is afraid that I might fail. I was very angry. That relates back to the question that everything is very ambiguous. When you are the boss, you are the boss. Also my decision is not an absolute decision. It could be overwritten any time, which I felt very unhappy. Because I am not able to prove to myself and other people that I am able to do that. I can never do that".

## 5. MANAGING DIRECTOR HAPPENED TO BE MY FATHER. THAT IS SOMETHING THAT I FEEL VERY FRUSTRATED

"M.D. happened to be my father. A lot of people have this concept that oh, obviously because MD is my father, that is why it becomes natural that I become the General Manager. That is something that I really hate. It is an insult to me".

"In my work, I never tell people that MD is my father. Never. I never ever mention to any of my clients or any of my supplier. Sometimes they find out. Of course when they ask, I cannot say he is not related. I can't say that. It is the fact that he is my father. That is something that I feel very frustrated. Something I feel that people underestimate my capability".

AS A MANAGER, I AM....

### 1. I AM THE BRIDGE OF THE OLD AND NEW GENERATION

"Here there are two groups of people, one the older, the other the younger. I belong no where. I am somewhere inbetween. The communication bridge between the older and the younger".

"Purchasing is my job, or has become my job. Last time it wasn't. It happened just simply because over here the older generation, none of them speak English. When we come in, they find that even their second generation cannot adequately translate or give them a clearer picture, to communicate with the suppliers. When I come in, it becomes very natural that I take over the job because I can communicate, I can get a clearer picture. So it becomes my functions after certain years. It has never been announced. Everybody knows that now I am in charge of purchasing, in fact more than 90%. So all the work is done in this way, not just my post".

### 2. MY FUNCTION IS NOT CLEAR CUT

"There is no clear cut. For example, like myself. If you ask me what is my function here, I don't know. There is no clear cut. I am a general worker here because I touch on everythings. And I also touch nothing sometimes. You see what I mean. And I have to



find my own job to do. I find my own objectives, which sometimes have nothing to do with the policy here".

"My work involved, production, product development, purchasing; I am not involved in the finance. The way I look at it is that we do not have an organizational chart. That is why I said I don't know where I stand and what my functions here. It seems that I am doing everything".

### 3. PROBLEMS ARISE, I HAVE TO TAKE CARE

"Any problems arise, I have to take care. People approach me. Because I am involved in the purchasing. So once they approach me for help. After the first time, there is a second time. So my work involved in production right now is not my function, but it is my help to them. It is my own help to them. It is not designated by the company".

### 4. IT BECOMES A LOT OF BURDEN TO ME

"So everything falls into me. It becomes very natural. I am here in the factory most of the time. I come here to work at seven o'clock in the morning. I go home at five sharp. So right from the beginning of the day, till end of the day, I know exactly what is happening in the factory. I am able to solve the problems for them. So it becomes very natural kind of taking over. So it becomes a lot of burden to me. Right now I as a person, I am functioning as four persons job. It makes me become very inefficient. My time is being taken away. Attention is being lowered. And I have no proper assistance. That is why I say everything is ambiguous".

"Having so much thing in your mind it is a very naturally tendency that when you lie in bed and try to relax, then you start thinking about the work. A lot of decision is being done in bed. I do admit that".

### 5. I AM VERY INDISPENSIBLE

"Just like right now, today. Past one week, I have been away. But I come back today suddenly I have so much work. I thought I was very dispensible, but in fact I am not. I become very indispensable to them.



Because a lot of decisions are waiting for me. I must make this decision. I must make that decision".

#### 6. IF I LEAVE, I LEAVE WITH A LOT OF MESS

"They change my designation because I said I am going to resign in this August. Then everybody gets panic. If I really leave the job, I am really leaving a lot of mess here in this company. They become too dependent on me. This is what I do not like to see that. When I go on leave, the company still function. They have problems, they solve it by themselves. But may be it is just psychologically they depend on me because I can give them the confidence. If I leave, they start shaking. Of course, once I leave the company, the whole infrastructure there created collapsed. Those people who function under me, who have power because of me will no longer having that kind of power. Because they will be removed when I leave the company. So I am going to leave a lot of mess here".

#### 7. I WANT TO PERFORM TO GET REWARD

"I consider myself as an employee. I want to perform to reward. I have the obligation. But this obligation will not stay here forever. I keep telling myself. Once I have brought the company to the peak, that is the end of my job. I have so to speak that I have paid back the obligation to the company and my father. The others all depending on them".

#### 8. I AM RECOGNIZED

"Right now I am officially being appointed as General Manger. Of course now I have the authority. It becomes a recognition already, after some time working here. They want to follow my instruction willingly. That is very good. I feel very good. Because I am able to show them".

#### 9. MY PROBLEM IS FROM MY LEVEL UP

"So from my level down, there is no problem. Now my problem is from my level up, the board of directors, the managing director".

#### 10. I MUST STAY BACK BECAUSE OF MY FATHER. I FEEL OBLIGATED

"I was planning to go, but at the end I didn't because my sister strongly object the idea. I must stay back because of my father. I think I have a lot to give in".

"My father treat us very well. Treat all of us very well in the family. Give us education. That is all I ask for. And I have the obligation to work for this company as I told you. I don't like to work in this company honestly. But I have the obligation because I am the eldest son. There is no other replacement. If I had an elder brother, I would like to be independent. May be I also join in the company but to the new development where I can face new challenge. So next time my son or my future generation, what is going to happen if this company stays to next generation. I would like to see somebody taking over this company, my son or my daughter. I would like to see it carries on".

#### 11. MY FATHER IS OVER PROTECTIVE

"The way my father treats me. I feel that he is over protective. I consider myself as employee here. I never take advantage that he is my father".

"He has been in the controlling situation for the past 34 years and still remains because nobody dare to take over his job, in the first place. The way I look at it, none of them suits to be this post. None of them".

#### 12. MY FATHER PROTECT MY COUSIN TOO. BUT HE FAILED

"Actually my father also protect my cousin a lot. When he first joined the company, he consulted him a lot. He had a lot of hope in him. But he failed. He really failed him, and he failed a lot of people. This is very sad. I am very disappointed on that".

#### 13. I SUCCEED BECAUSE I WORK HARD

"My cousin is very intelligent and he is very cunny. I think he is more clever than me. But I work harder. That is why I succeed".

## 14. BUT I NEED EXPERIENCE

"I only console myself that it is good for me because I learn it. What I desperately need now is experience that I need. Now I am doing all first hand basis. I do not have enough experience. To become a vacuum, I am very afraid that I fail, because I am not being able to handle the situation properly. Because I am accountable to all these consequences. That is something that I really need".

## 15. I NEED BOTH POWER AND MATERIAL REWARD

"I need both. Everybody needs both. I see myself I am going to get this amount of money for the next five years, only 5% increment for the next five years. Five years from now, what will I achieve? No where"

## 16. I HAVE THE CONFIDENCE

"But I have the confidence that if we implement that, we can be very successful. Provided I have or any of the successor has the energy to go on. Next time, when I am old. When I am fifty five, I want to retire. I don't think I want to work till too old. Because I must make sure that I have a good successor to take over my job. While I am not too old, I must be able to keep an eye on him. To train him up to make sure that he goes right to the bottom and start climbing up".

## 17. MY HOPE IN THIS COMPANY

"I am hoping that in future in this company, I hope that my staff work for me for their working life. And that is Chinese concept. I want to make them feel like a family. I am quite flexible".

"On the other hand, I must see that this company will go to public one day. Because the company must stay but the persons don't have to. As far as I am concern, I have done my job. I give my third generation, or third generation of this family the company. If you cannot perform, you sell it away, too bad. So there is some Chinese value inside there. But on the other hand, also carries over the Western because the company must stay. If you are no good, you have to go. So we can achieve both. A lot of Chinese company, when they die, the companies also die. I think

this shouldn't be the case. The company must stay. If you are not fit, you go. The only way to do that is public listed. It is my ultimate goal in this company".

## CONCLUSION

### IT IS THE CULTURE THAT MAKES THE ORGANIZATION DIFFERENT

"It is the culture that makes the organization different. So I do not totally believe in the Western management. I want to blend the both. I cannot perceive the management style here in the majority of the organizations here in Singapore. I cannot perceive how it is going to be in the future because it seems that the direction is not clear. At one stage, about 10 years ago, NPB tried to manipulate, or introduce the Western management. Six year ago, productivity, copy the Japanese into the Singapore. There is no clear direction. What happen now? I do not know".

### I DON'T SEE WHY CHINESE MANAGEMENT CANNOT BE BETTER THAN THE OTHERS

"Why Chinese management fail? First thing the power core. It becomes a mismanipulation. That is why it fails. Taking advantage. That is why it fails. If such thing is not there, I don't see why Chinese management cannot be any better than others".

### WE HAVE NO CHINESE MANAGEMENT BOOKS TO FOLLOW

"In Chinese family, within the family, we repeat it again and again. Such thing happening in this company, also happening in the other company. In the Western, no. Because they have a lot of books to follow. Can you find a Chinese management book ? No. You can learn from a book. You can learn from the phenomena. Chinese family, no, nothing at all. You can learn to avoid repeating the history".

## STORY 2 : T.F. (Father of T.S. Old age group)

### INTRODUCTION

"I am the Managing Director of the organization. I am one of pioneers in this organization. We, my brother, myself and two friends, started about thirty-five years ago. Now, we have a board of directors. The board of directors consists of four shareholders. The four directors are: one Managing Director, one Finance Director, one Director and Production Manager, the other one doesn't have any special title. But he mostly take charge of the account".

"We are partners for many many years. Very rarely we have conflicts. Because we are very sincere in dealing with the job. The most important thing is that we have first of all the company as the ultimate goal".

"We have three new generation, the sons of the shareholders to come in and help. If a family entrepreneur is to continue, because we are Chinese family entrepreneur, we certainly hope that our young generation will take over our business. Therefore we encouraged them to study what is going to be helpful for our business".

### TRADITIONAL CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS.....

#### A. SMALL SIZE

"Because we started small. Our factory is small. Our export is small. Majority of our business comes from the local market. In the local market, we will sell it from one provision shop to another. Therefore the quantity is small".

#### B. CONFORM TO THE MAJORITY

"Among the board of directors, Sometimes in our daily routine, when we have real problems, we have to discuss before we do it. We have discussion and finally make a decision. Conform to the majority. If that is the majority view, we will follow the majority view to implement it".



"With the new generation, our management method is the same. We the board of directors will discuss. Sometimes we discuss ourselves. Sometimes we ask them to discuss together. The most important thing is to conform to the majority. Everybody doesn't necessarily have the same view. Especially when these three are our young generation. But it can still find a way to finally come up with a conclusion. The most important thing is to conform to the majority view. Despite how we do it, there is always one final conclusion. This conclusion is more acceptable by majority people".

#### C. LEADERSHIP IS MOST IMPORTANT

"Leadership is the most important. To lead this company in order to promote the company's progress".

"The most important thing is the department organization. To organize the person in charge of each department. If I am given all the work, I am not able to do it all. Every department has its organization. Select one person to manage. But you don't rely on him. Don't feel that because you have a person to be in charge, you can relax. We have to go and watch everyday. To help and to see whether they have any difficulty. Go everyday".

"To motivate every department to work efficiently. For example, the production department. We have to insure that their quality has no mistake. Also the speed of the production will not slow down".

"Therefore the leadership ability means the cooperative relationship with the person-in-charge of every department".

"In our sales department we have salespersons and sales supervisor. I am still involved in the local market. I am still doing it. Very seriously handling it. Therefore I still often contact our sales supervisor to discuss our daily happening".

#### D. PAY ATTENTION TO HUMAN RELATIONS

"I know some of the small entrepreneur, the partnership. A lot of them did it for a little while and decided to split the partnership, or terminate the business. This is related to the management approach,



and whether the business is progressing. The connection is very strong here. For example, if the organization continues to lose money, it would certainly close door. If the organization was doing not bad, but inside there are power struggle, it would certainly split apart too. This I am very cautious about this problem. I have a concept and understanding because before I organized this company, I worked for other people. I encountered companies that had this problem. The company's work was not bad, but there was power struggle. Consequently, they were all finished. Therefore when I organized this company, I was very cautious about dealing with the management approach. Therefore, I especially pay attention to the human relations. It is very important. Otherwise I as the Managing Director, if I have a meeting with my directors, and everybody has a long face, how to do business together?"

#### E. WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WORKERS NEEDS AND PERSONAL LIFE

"When we first organized at that time, many things were dealt in family way. Later, in the past ten years, because our Singapore industry is very advanced. There is a lack of work labor. Therefore there is a need to change the management approach. There were more or less some changes. That is the worker's welfare. Generally we follow the labor law to deal with it. Individual needs we certainly will find other ways to help".

"For example, if they have happy occasions, they have celebration. We will be very willing to be invited. If there are sad occasions, all our company members, seniors and juniors, will voluntarily donate some money for them. And also participate the ceremony in the evening".

"That is to say if this person joined us in our work, if we know him, we will treat him more personally. Sometimes we will find chance to talk with them about their family. Allow them to have chance to express to us their family issues. If it is within our ability, we will help them. Or we will suggest them how to handle the family matters, children problems, financial problems or other problems. We will help them to resolve their problems. We care about the staff's personal life".

#### F. THE BOSSES HAVE NO PRIVILEGES

"Because our company is a small size company. We the bosses and the other workers do all the big and little things together. There is no special privileges. We the bosses would not order the workers to do everything. If the work is very difficult, we won't ask them to do. It may be why they respect us".

#### G. TAKE CARE OF THE OLD WORKERS IN CHANGE

"When our business progressed gradually, we had more people. The scope of work involved was also wider. So we had to divide into groups. In dividing groups, we had to take care of the old workers, and some relatives. We would give them more priority. Finally, we discovered that education became more common. We encountered the problem of different education mentality".

"But the old staff , we will try our best to let them stay till they can't work. We will provide more when they retire. We will also try our best to arrange their work. Try very best not to change their work, unless there is a very good method and opportunity to do it. Don't ever hurt their hearts. They will feel very sad. To use our heart and thinking. This is very important. For example, in the past, we had a sales manager. To be frank, you can do it with a primary school educated person if he is willing to go and get business. Now you can't. Now if you find a primary school educated person to be the sales manager, his salespersons may be secondary school educated. They won't be convinced. Then what can you do?"

#### H. THE MEETING IS UNFIXED. WE DISCUSS ANYTIME

"The meeting among the shareholders is unfixed. In fact if there is anything that we need to discuss, because we are here everyday, we work everyday, we can discuss it anytime. But we have fixed general meeting. At least once a month".

"The Board of Directors' meeting is generally not fixed. Anytime there is any problem, all the directors will have a meeting any time. Meeting with the departments is fixed".

## I. WE KNOW EACH OTHER.

"Because I think that we have been in the partnership for many years. We are colleagues for many many years. Our personality, attitudes and temperament, we all know each other".

## OUR ORGANIZATION IS.....

### A. SUCCESSION PLAN

"It was in 1978. Our old factory was too small to be used. The government wanted to use our old factory. If we wanted to continue our business, we had to train up our new generation. Therefore I discussed with our shareholders. Three out of four have sons studying in the pre-university. Three of them agreed to encourage their sons to succeed our work. Therefore we arranged for them to come and discuss with us. The result was that they accepted it. That was to say if they left school, they would come here to work. I proposed them to apply ... because we are in this field. At that time, I felt that I was hoping that three of them could go abroad to study food science. When they came back, they could have short-term training in business administration, like the diploma class. Later three of them applied to England's university and were accepted. Two went. One didn't. He wanted to study Business Administration at the National University of Singapore. After a few years, they all graduated. At that time, because our new generation accepted to go and study Food Science, Food engineering, which meant that they have decided that they were planning to work here. Therefore we applied for Jurong to expand our factory. We prepared to have more space for the factory".

### B. THE THREE NEW GENERATION

#### 1. SOME ARE MORE PRACTICAL, SOME ARE MORE IDEALISTIC

"When we arranged work for them, we discovered that among the new generation, some are more practical based on our observation. They followed what we did before, and make changes gradually. Some are too idealistic, they can't continue. Because they see the management of our company, the facility and organization, everything was very dissatisfactory.

Sometimes they said it was all wrong, or something. I don't know. They said that they can't continue".

## 2. IF YOU DON'T GIVE THEM THE TITLE, THEY MAY NOT BE HAPPY

"When they first came in, they wanted to have personal business cards. At that time, it was very difficult to make a decision. They wanted to print the title 'manager' on their cards. But my first reaction was to check, and to consult with other friends. Some said that it was not good to give them a managerial title at the beginning. You can give them a supervisor or assistant manager, then slowly promote them. Some said that you might as well give them the managerial title. It doesn't matter. I think they really like to be managers. If you didn't give them the title, they might not be happy".

## 3. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THEIR JOB

"Our concept is like this: the most important thing is not a matter of manager or not manager, the most important thing is their job. Because we have a board of directors, and other colleagues. Many of them have very long experience. How is their performance? Everybody can tell".

## 4. THE WAY I HANDLE THE NEW GENERATION IS TO ENCOURAGE THEM AND EXCHANGE OPINION WITH THEM

"The way I handle it is to gradually overcome it. Slowly encourage them. Because three persons come, some are busy every day. They can accept. Some don't listen. I myself have tried humbly to exchange opinions with them. They answer it rather un-seriously. The factors are many. It is the attitude in life. Based on my observation in these few years. They go to bed very late. Can't wake up in the morning. Their fathers wake them up. They said they didn't want to get up. Everyday is the same. We have delegated tasks to them. They are not afraid. But let's say if we really want to push him, he may resent. Maybe. Therefore up till now, I haven't thought of any better method to persuade them".

"We always hope that our new generation will have a new attitude. Like what I said just now 自动自发 (Ze Ton Ze Fa). We always hope that".

### C. SHAREHOLDER SELECTED THE GENERAL MANAGER

"Among them, one have come in for five years, one for four years, one for three years. In these years, our business has progressed. In management, it is certainly more complicated. It could be said that it is hard work. Therefore the shareholders suggested that among the three young generation, we need to select one and promote him to be the General Manager. To delegate him more work and responsibility. Therefore recently, we selected one to lead in more work. This person was selected as a result of the discussion among the shareholders. Of course after the discussion, we had to ask for his consensus. He is my son".

#### 1. HE IS MORE RESPONSIBLE

"The shareholders felt that he is more responsible. He does everything. He would not avoid any responsibility, or be too idealistic about things".

#### 2. HE IS MORE ABLE TO ACCEPT THINGS

"He is more able to accept things. The big and little jobs in the whole factory, he can be involved. Moreover, other colleagues who have any difficulty, they approach him. Because he is always in the factory or office".

#### 3. HE HAS A GOOD RAPPORT WITH THE WORKERS. EVERYBODY LOOKS TO HIM FOR HELP

"He does everything. Therefore everybody will look to him for help. When they have needs, they will naturally look for him. Many workers said that he is not bossy, and doesn't have the 'university graduate' ego. When they have any difficulty, or any problems in work, he will be willing to help. He has good rapport with the workers. This is very important".

### D. MY SON.

#### 1. HE IS HELPING ME TO DO THE PURCHASING

"Now my son is helping to do the purchasing. Purchasing involves the need to use the English language. I let him be responsible. Moreover the soy source production. I also pass it on to him to



improve. The chili sauce too. I pass it on to him to improve".

## 2. HE HAS A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE AND MORE ABLE TO ACCEPT THE WORK

"All the two and three young people are managers. They printed 'manager' on their name cards. He is the Plant Manager. He is involved in the production department. He is more able to accept. May be it is because when he was young, we lived quite nearby the factory. All along, the technology is mine. Therefore he often went to help in the factory. Therefore he has a lot of knowledge. Therefore when he graduated, he is more able to accept the work. I hope that he will improve the soysauce".

## 3. MY SON IS MORE FLEXIBLE, THE OTHER PERSON IS MUCH SLOWER IN ACCEPTING THINGS

"The other person is much slower in accepting things. He can study. It's funny. Everybody studies and get the same degree certificate. But in their work, some are not able to transfer and apply their knowledge. They often talk about theory. Not really related to us. My son, frankly speaking, he is more flexible. He went to the Polytechnic to take courses. He went to contact the lecturer there to get a part-time teaching. Once a week in the evening. He doesn't earn much money. Indirectly he reviews what he learned before. This is one purpose. The other purpose is that the lecturers and he are colleagues. If he wants to borrow books, he can do it. Moreover the best thing is that he could use their equipment. Some of the equipments are worth a few million dollars. He can use it anytime. If we want to do research and has no equipment, he can use it there for free. He is more flexible".

## E. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW GENERATION

### 1. OUR OLD GENERATION EMPHASIZE ON EMOTION. THEY PREFER A MORE COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT METHOD

"Our older generation emphasize on emotion 感情 (Kan Chin), emphasize on human emotion 人情 (Ren Chin). We, among the shareholders, if we have any different views, we will slowly think about some ways to persuade



him. In terms of the employer-employee relation, we always make it feel like a family. But the young generation, they have their view points. Sometimes they show that they don't like the way it is done. They prefer a more comprehensive management method. For example, more .... theoretical. Or look for some business administration theory to apply here".

## 2. OUR WAY IS MORE STEP BY STEP, THEY USE MORE SPEEDY METHOD

"For example, our old generation. The attitudes toward the career, our way of managing the work is more step by step following the path. My observation of the young generation is that if they follow our way, they will not be satisfied. They hope to use a more speedy method to promote the work. But by using the more speedy method to handle the work, you cannot continue transmit on our old concepts".

## 3. WE HAVE EXPERIENCE. THEY HAVE MORE EDUCATION

"What we know is based on our thirty over years experience. I never read any business administration books before. Our young generation have higher education. When we discuss with them, we have to be humble".

## 4. IF WE DON'T CHANGE, THE NEW GENERATION MAY NOT ACCEPT. THERE WILL BE A LOT OF DIFFICULTIES

"Because our old generation management style is more old management style, more 人情 Ren Chin way of dealing with things. The new generation may not accept, or unable to accept. Therefore if the organization method is not changed, there will be a lot of difficulties. To keep dragging, there will not be progress".

## 5. IT SEEMS THAT IT IS NOT ABLE TO SATISFY THEM

"From what I see, presently our business is still relatively conservative. It seems that it is not able to satisfy them. Because the old generation started from a very small organization keep working on it, till our present size. Frankly speaking, we the older generation has already felt a very heavy responsibility. Therefore if we are going to continue

expanding, if the new generation doesn't come in to match with us, we won't be able to hold the responsibility. But they seem to see our company as very small".

#### 6. WE HAVE TO BE CAUTIOUS IN THE CHANGE

"In terms of management, like the company standard and power, the young generation manage. The board of directors deal with important matters. We have meetings. The older staff, and those who work here longer, those who are responsible for the jobs, we will have meetings and discussion with them for suggestion of improvement. Of course we have to tell them what are the causing factors, what to be improved, and see what is their response. If majority of them object, we will think about other ways to improve. If majority of them agree, we can then implement it. We have to be very cautious in the change".

#### 7. WE SHOULD CHANGE GRADUALLY

"In terms of change, from my view point, it depends on the organization. Like our organization, we have old and new generation mixing together. If we apply it all, I feel it is very difficult. It should be changed gradually. I am not objecting it, but I feel it should be a gradual change. For example, if the person in charge of this department is old generation, if we want to change him, we have to slowly convince him. If that person is retired. We can find a new generation. Then we can use the new management method to manage. My intention is to encourage them to change it gradually".

#### F. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE ORGANIZATION

##### 1. SINGAPORE IS PROGRESSING. WE HAVE TO PROGRESS

"Because in Singapore, the industry is progressing, we cannot have no progress. Moreover, now Singapore has the Economic Development Board, National Productivity Board to motivate all these. They offer training courses. In our company, we send people for training. The company is responsible. The company paid for it. If we send people there, at least they need to have general education, then they are more able to absorb. The minimum is secondary standard. Primary level is difficult. The old staff, our relationship is

more related as relatives or friends. They had little education. They have to stay. We hope that they will value it. They need to be trained and helped. They need to go for such training. But there are difficulties because of their little education. I think, in the future, when we need staff or workers, we should emphasize more on work. Don't think so much about they are relatives and friends. But one problem is that because there are many relatives and friends who started with us since the beginning of the business, they have to stay".

"When we first came here, at that time, it was very difficult to find a job. When we started our business, some friends and relatives came to us and asked us to help their sons. Let them come and learn. Now it is few. Because the industrial society is more advanced. It is much easier to find a job. Therefore we also think that this is an advantage".

## 2. EDUCATION DIFFERENCE

"Generally, if you have a primary school level education and you want to manage the secondary school educated. Of course it is difficult. The subordinates would certainly not satisfied. They would generally be more incooperative. These relatives and friends. they had working experience but not education. Their management method, because their education and knowledge was lower, although they had working experience, they didn't have specialized knowledge..... To put it simply, they didn't know how to use, didn't know how to use the proper management skills and knowledge. They could only use the old method. It may be because their education level was low. Didn't really know how to manage. Therefore they had a lot of problems".

## 3. THE THREE SUCCESSORS ARE HIGHLY EDUCATED

"Another problem is that our new generation, the successors, the three people are more highly educated. If we still find more relatives and friends for them, if their management style is different from us, it may create a lot of difficulties. We are also worried about this problem. Therefore we have to take it slowly. When we need to fill in new workers, we try to hire more outsiders".

#### 4. LOWER EDUCATED PEOPLE, NOT WILLING TO EXPRESS

"Whenever there is a meeting, generally the lower educated people, they seem to not willing to express whether they agree or disagree. We are not quite sure either. Is it because they don't understand, or they want to object but dare not to, or agree but dare not to say. But finally, I always discover that everything seem to be fine. But in the meeting, they seem not to speak".

#### 5. THE SALESPERSONS DARE NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

"The salespersons dare not take responsibility. May be they have low education. They dare not bear the responsibility. How are we going to think about a way to make them secured and accept it? I don't know. We have been very concerned about this problem".

"They don't have the knowledge and the management concept. They don't seem to know anything about management. We support their work. I told them that they work very hard. Appreciate what they do".

#### 6. FAMILY RELATIVE PROBLEMS

"Our business is family entrepreneur. Semi-family, semi-entrepreneur. Everybody's relative who works here seem to have problems. For example, one of the shareholder's relative. He is sometimes very talkative and naggy. This is very difficult. Family problem. Outsider will not have this kind of problems. Our own people's problem".

"Up till now, the most terrifying thing is our own people. If we are not our own people, outsiders will be very much easier to manage. Our personnel officer is faced with the same problem".

"Maybe it is this way. Own people have back up. Sometimes when they have dissatisfaction and frustration, they say anything they like. They are not afraid that we would sack them".

"It is not that we dare not sack them. But we are not very willing to do this. We have principles in the way we do things. We don't want to be talked about by



other people. To have rumours that when our business is progressing gradually, we sack our old staffs. We are afraid of this. This is a kind of Chinese traditional concept. Therefore it is difficult. May be this is our weakness.

## 7. OLD WORKERS PROBLEMS

"Sometimes, Chinese always like to use emotion. But theory is theory. It is very easy to say. To really do it is going to be very difficult. If this staff is here for very long, for twenty, thirty years ago. If we want to change him, it is very difficult. We are afraid of this. Our business is small size. In the present condition, we don't have to require highly educated people to manage. When our business is progressing to medium size, doing bigger business, then our departments will have more work. The person in charge of course need to be a higher standard person. It is also very difficult to change this".

## 8. LANGUAGE PROBLEM

"Language is also a social problem. I don't know why? Actually many work can still be done in Chinese. I also come across many companies that their documents are all in English. In fact the boss is in the same situation as myself--we both do not speak English but he signs in English. It is very funny".

"We use English. Because our staff know English. They said that Chinese writing is more troublesome. Therefore they use English. We have no other ways. I trust them. They read it to me. If the content is correct, I will sign. I have to trust them".

"Doing business, generally we speak in dialects. To workers, we also speak in dialects. It is Very funny".

"We speak in dialect in the meeting. Sometimes mixed. If our personnel officer is in the meeting, he likes to speak in Mandarin. Other people can understand. Our directors can also understand. Majority of us can understand, but we can't speak it fluently. Like me I often mixed with Hokkien in it. Sometimes I have to think for a very long time, but unable to think and express it in Mandarin".

## G. WE HAVE A PERSONNEL OFFICER

### 1. WE HAVE TO GET A PERSONNEL OFFICER TO HELP IN DEALING THE PROBLEMS

"Before that I used to explain to them. Hope that through good explanation, they will perform better. Years past, we have many difficulties. Therefore we have to get a personnel officer to help in dealing the problems. Let him observe in front. If he really has problem, we will resolve it together. We don't have to be tied down by the problems".

"He is from outside. None of the shareholders knew him. I don't know whether this is a right way. I don't know. This is only an experiment. But it is meant to be more objective in management. Don't be too subjective. Or allow shareholders to influence his management method".

### 2. PERSONNEL OFFICER ENCOUNTER VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

"The personnel officer sometimes encounter very difficult problems. They have to get help from us. Frankly speaking, according to the report of our personnel officer, our difficulties seem to lie on the old staffs. These old staff are mostly related, like the relatives and friends".

"I based on the experience we encountered here, and think of the potential problems in the future. We have to pay attention to it. But it doesn't mean that we should hire all outsiders, and don't use your own people. Can't do it that way either. Because if there are relatives and friends who have sons that have interests in the job, and if we have the vacancy, we will still hire them to come here to learn. But there should be a target. Like the personnel officer should think about these people and our own target, and our own people. For example, we can target not to exceed 20%".

AS A MANAGER, I AM.....

A. THE COMPANY GIVES ME THE POSITION AUTHORITY. I MUST MAXIMIZE IT



"I am playing this role, most importantly it is the company which gives me the position authority. Without this position authority, I can't represent the company to motivate the departments. Most importantly the board of directors has to give me the power. With the position authority, I must maximize it. If I don't maximize, don't manage, the board of directors will be disappointed. Other people will not be convinced".

B. AS A MANAGING DIRECTOR, I HAVE TO.....

### 1. UNDERSTAND THEIR PERSONALITY

"For example, I am the Managing Director. Of course I have to most importantly understand all of their personality. Therefore when we discuss something, I have to use my heart and thinking a little bit. Don't say things that they don't like. We will try our best to avoid to bring it up to him because every one of us has our own temperament".

### 2. HAVE FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE

"We older generation in dealing with the younger generation, of course every shareholders has different view point. Some are very pragmatic. If a person can't show any result, the shareholder will be dissatisfied. Like my attitude is more flexible. Sometimes I help them at the side. Sometimes I hope that they will initiate it and develop it themselves 自动自发 (Zi Dong Zi Fa). Because I feel that their education is higher than the older generation. Therefore they must have more knowledge. Therefore we have to be humble with them to encourage them. Allow them to initiate and develop themselves 自动自发 (Zi Dong Zi Fa) and then show it".

"We cannot be too static and inflexible. If that person has work experience, but without education, of course the way we manage, when we talk to him, we should use simple method to handle. If the person in charge of the department is more educated, of course we will discuss with him in more details. "The main thing is to know how to flexibly implement it. Cannot be too inflexible. Inflexibility will face difficulty.

### 3. HELP THEM IN THEIR WORK

"Among the directors, we have to be mutually encouraging, mutually understanding. When we have any issues and problems, we must be mutually understanding. Gradually to change his idea. If I am the manager, it is more important. I have to always help them in their work. If faced with difficulty in work, we have to help them to resolve the problems. Don't make him feel difficult. If we discover his mistake, it is better not to blame him. It is unnecessary to blame him. To slowly focus on the issue, or to use other approaches, or to use other topics to shift to it, let him know it a little bit. Then it is enough. You don't have to tell him directly: You did it wrong. I think he would feel very uncomfortable in his heart".

#### 4. TAKE CARE OF THEIR FEELINGS

"Therefore it is very important to take care of his feelings. You must let him have the feelings that he can swallow it. If you push him, he will resent. This is one of the ways. Try very best not to show your temper to people".

#### 5. TALK TO THEM MYSELF

"Before that, I would talk to them myself. Now it is through the personnel. If he pinpoints that he wants to talk to me, I will certainly very happily to accept him. I can't just say that I don't care, you talk to the personnel. This will make him feel embarrassed. May be he is feeling misunderstood or misjudged, or something dissatisfied, if you reject him, he will feel uncomfortable in his heart. You have to make arrangement to have a time to make him feel satisfied. Slowly we will explain and analyze for him to understand".

#### 6. SINCERELY DISCUSS WITH THEM

"In my view, I think, he is a person. I am also a person, although the position authority is different. Every jobs that need improvement, we have to sincerely discuss with them. Don't use your power and bossy style. Generally I don't like that. I feel that we are colleagues. If we discover that there is something wrong in the job, we have to improve. We have to ask the management to help to improve. We have to sincerely discuss with them what are the difficulties of this

department. If you said to him:... This department is not doing well. You go and think about it. After you think it through, then come back. I think this is not good. It makes people feel vague, can't catch anything. I really pay attention on this problem. If we want to achieve this goal, we have to discuss with our colleagues till they totally understand our company's ideas, and what is our company's need".

#### 7. THINK OF A WAY TO HELP HIM

"When the department has a meeting, generally I will ask the person-in-charge of the department to take the responsibility. Sometimes if he really needs me to be present, I will sit in. For example, the sales department supervisor. Actually he seems to be very cautious in everything he does. He doesn't have enough courage. Sometimes if he is asked to chair a meeting, he seems not willing to do it. Later I think about a way to help him. I lead in a meeting. I started chairing the meeting. The supervisor became my consultant. I played the role that I needed to consult him. To show it to all the people that I pay attention to this supervisor. Later I gradually passed on to him. In the meeting, I would start with some simple ideas, he would then take over for the rest of the time. Slowly I didn't even have to be at the meeting. Or I would sit at a side to listen to them. If you discover that this person dare not use the group approach to discuss for improvement. We can help him. If I want to use him to be the supervisor, I don't want to make him feel difficult. In front of the subordinates try to make him feel that he is incapable. I must think of a way. Pretending that many of the company's problems I have to ask him in front of many people. It is actually appropriate for me to ask him because many things are done by them and not done by me".

#### 8. DO EVERYTHING, KNOW EVERYTHING, MANAGE EVERYTHING

"Manager means when the company is small, you do everything. You don't differentiate tasks. Because I myself know technology and learn to do sales. But I don't have the education. But when I started as a learner, how my boss managed us, I followed his method. I felt that we could manage the whole, but if we faced any problems, we could discuss with friends. Or we could consult other people. We had to manage

everything. Because I am the managing director, I have to know everything".

"If you don't know, don't understand, when your subordinates have any problems to ask you for help, if I don't know, how am I going to resolve it. If all of us feel difficult to make a decision on should or shouldn't change, the Managing Director has to finally resolve the matter. You can't say that everybody has no suggestion for resolution, then no need to change. Because the business has to progress. This is the general management. If it is the technology, if you know it it is the best. But if you don't know the technology of course, I need to hire a person, who is very specialized in mastering the technology. If there is any technical problems, I will discuss with him".

"In the surface, I manage everything. When I discover a little problem, I don't know anything. I don't bother. In the meeting, may be if it is necessary, I will ask the person who is in charge to deal with it or to pay attention. If the little problem, I have to manage it myself. I will be overwhelmed. But the important ones or urgent ones, we have to be responsible any time. We can't escape from our responsibility".

#### 9. BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY. CONCERN ABOUT THEIR JOB

"We had to bear the responsibility. They will then know that we are concerned about the job. If I have reward but no hard work, this is a wastage of the company. Therefore every departments I have to care. If I don't care, I shouldn't be here taking the salary. I don't have to come here to work. A reward must have hard work. This is my concept".

#### C. MY JOBS ARE.....

"Presently I arrived here at around nine o'clock. We start work at eight here. Due to my gestric problems in the past few years, I come a little bit later. If there are important things, I still come early. When I come here, I first arrange the work, find out whether there are things to do in the office. If not, I will go to the factory, to every department to look around. Also the product development, I will go and look around. To see whether there are anythings that I need



to attend to. If not, I will come back here. Then I will check whether there are letters from yesterday afternoon that I have to read. To see whether there are anythings that we need to discuss. Very fast, the morning is over. In the afternoon, after I came back from lunch, the same thing, I will go to look at the factory again. The major two parts are the office and the factory. Sometimes I have to go out. Generally it is for the purchasing of the raw material. I have to go out to make contact".

### 1. I AM STILL DOIGN LOCAL SALES .

"Our sales is very important. We will still continue in the future. We have to let them know that the sales matter is ultimately handled by the sales supervisor. Have to let them know it gradually. Our new generation is coming in slowly. They are now holding the positions of managers. But I am still leading. Like my nephew who studied in Business Administration at the National University of Singapore. We let him be the marketing development manager. I discover that he likes to do big export business. The local business, every time I ask him to improve it based on his own view. He doesn't express whether his wants. But he never promises that he will do it. Therefore the sales department tentatively has no one manager. I have to substitute the sales manager. And the other directors are helping me".

### 2. WALK AROUND TO SEE WHETHER THEY HAVE PROBLEMS

"When I first arrive, if they have anything important, they will look for me anytime. If not I generally will go and inspect every department's work. I walk around in the factory to see whether they have any problems. Then I come back here".

### 3. READ THE LETTERS AND DELEGATE THE RESPONSIBILITY

"Presently, the most important thing is everyday the company receive many letters, I have to know all the things and happenings. To delegate for people to handle it. Now I am still the person to pay attention on this matter. But when I am thinking who should be the person to handle the issue, I will consult two to three people for their opinion to decide who should be responsible for the task".

"After that, I have to write letter. Two mails times per day. In the mid-afternoon if there is no visitor, around eleven the letters will be opened. Because I don't know English, they will read it first. We don't actually have any secretive issues. Then they will show me and read it to me once. I will inform and delegate personally to the staff to handle. In the afternoon I usually walk around. If there are visitors, or some sales matters. I rarely involved in the exports because they usually speak in English. I don't know. I delegate it to my nephew or my nephew's supervisor to do. Local sales, there is usually nothing daily. They all go out. Usually in the afternoon, the supervisor will contact me for some matters. And the personnel officer will also report me the happenings in the afternoon. I also talk with him what are the difficulties, because now we have the old and young generations. Gradually we delegate them. Many works although I am responsible, but I delegate them to do it".

#### 4. TO WATCH AND INSPECT THEIR JOB

"To watch with your open eyes. I manage every kind of work. Because all these technology were mine originally. Therefore whether they do it right, I know. Therefore I inspect them to see whether they do it right. Also to see whether the person-in-charge of the department needs my help. I will ask them whether they have issues".

"I go everyday. Unless I am especially busy or I go out for meeting. Sometimes there are meetings. Sometimes the old associations, the Soysauce Association, I am the representative. Our new generation don't like these. They speak in dialect and are pretty small size. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce, The Manufacturer's Association, and the Trading Association, the new generation go. I am not able to go because I don't know English".

#### 5. SUPERVISE THE PRODUCTION

"Before, I did purchasing, purchasing raw material. Those who wanted raw material would come to me. Gradually I passed it on to one of the new generation. I asked him to take over the purchasing function for me. I am also responsible to go to the



factory to supervise the production, to investigate whether they have any problems. Everyday when I am free, I will go and observe them working. To find out whether they do it well".

"I think most of my job everyday is in the factory. The time to discuss with them is more. The time for individual thinking about the problem is less. In daily work, I spend maximum 20% of the time thinking about the issue. 80% of the time on working on the jobs".

"There are not many phone calls. Our telephones call are mostly for the sales department to contact business. The sales supervisors and two three other salespersons will take care of it".

"Our export manager, when having any important issues, he has to discuss with me. Sales issues has fewer problems daily. But at least for one sales meeting, I have to spend about two days time to prepare. For example, if on the 6th, we have a sales meeting. On the 4th, I have to start preparing, to collect some information on the last month sales, or last monthly report. To collect information to report to the people for discussion in the meeting".

## 6. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

"In the past, I joined the Soysauce Association, the associatin of our own field. We joined in there for many years. Now I am on the board of directors. The other one is the Food Manufacturer Association. Others such as Community Centre Management Committee, Chinese school's board of directors, I also participated. Now the bigger association such as the Manufacturer's Association, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Trading Association, Housing Development Board, our young generation are participating, representing our company to participate in their activity".

"To contact the emotions of the people in the field. Also in terms of the company activity, it will enhance the knowledge. We went abroad to observe and study, be the company representative. For example, the manufacturer of soysauce went to Japan to observe and study. We went to their manufacturer association to observe their production method".

## MANAGEMENT MEANS

"Management means that in every departments, all the jobs have an appointed person to manage. If we want to achieve this goal, we have to manage the business. We must have a clear direction. If we budget that a salesperson has to have how much sales, their scope of work, what is the role of the supervisor, these need to have management to control. It cannot be disconnected. If we have difficulty, modify. We can discuss it together how to modify. After modification, follow the method to manage. Must have management. Without management, there will be a mess".

"We delegate power people to do. Of course it is to manage people. But since it is to manage people to manage the job, he has to report his work situation, whether he is able to reach his target. It is to manage people, not to manage work. But the job is done by the people. Thus it should manage people. If manage job and not people, who will do the job? There are many problems. I think it is a very deep knowledge to be studied".

## METAPHOR OF ORGANIZATION

"I thought about it before. A business is like a machine. The main brain person is the engine of the machine. I had a kind of thought before. But never really pay whole lot of attention to this problem. This is only an ordinary thought. All the movements of the every departments are energized by the central brain person. Manager is the central brain person, that is the engine of the machine, the motor. If the motor is not turned on, all other will not move. Therefore everyday I have to have everyday routine work in mind. Every daily happenings, I have to know. You turn on to energize".

## CONCLUSION

### A. WE HAVE TO WORK HARD TO STRUGGLE

"In the past we have been learning about foodstuffs since we were very young. I continued to stay in the field. Our Singapore has more and more this kind of company. Therefore we have been living in a very difficult life. To further develop in our field, it has been very difficult. We really almost didn't

have any special chance at all. Our chance was to work, to use our hard work to struggle".

#### B. FAMILY ENTREPRENEUR MANAGEMENT WILL NOT BE IDEAL

"Based on the present situation, the succession of the new generation from the old generation, my idea is that to continue using family entrepreneur management will not be ideal. Our organization may need to be changed. Change means more flexibly apply management approaches".

#### C. I TOLD MY SON: IF YOU USE THOSE MANAGEMENT THEORY INTO THIS ORGANIZATION, YOU WILL HAVE MANY DIFFICULTIES

"Based on our thirty years of difficulties and experiences, I told my son: If you use those management theory into this organization, you will have many difficulties. Because the Western theory has its own concepts. They may not match us".

#### D. THE NEW GENERATION WILL GRADUALLY LEARN

"Now with the new generation, I think naturally they will change. From what I see, since there are still many old staffs, the older generation's approach, they will learn and apply, more or less".

**STORY 3 : T.YB. (Young brother of T.EB. Young age group)**

**INTRODUCTION**

"My brother and I are the shareholders in our organization. He is the Managing Director. I am the sales manager".

"In our organization, we have my brother, the office manager, plus the sales staffs, and we hired a lot of workers, labor, delivery, looking after store. I am in charge of the sales, Miss Tan is in charge of the office management, and my brother in charge of the production plus export. As for the office manager, she can look after all the clerks, and all the office people; plus the delivery boy, van driver, store clerk, all these and more that I know my office manager can handle. The small minor details I let her handle. Sales staffs, I handle. Sales people, anything they come directly to me. No need to go through so many people in order to tell me".

**CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS....**

**A. CHINESE DON'T EMPLOY EXPERTISE**

"Chinese don't employ the expertise to help".

**B. DIRECT DECISION**

"It depends on how big the organization is. Like ours, I think my sales and myself, we can make quick decisions. Because I am in-charge. I think I can handle most decisions directly. Unlike the finance matter. We have to consult. My brother and I will need to think strategically what to do and what steps to take. But for this type of business like sales. I think this way is good, I decide directly".

**C. IT DEPENDS ON THE SIZE**

"For management it depends on how big is your business? Depends on the type of business. When you talk about Chinese management, you have to think what kind of business...medium size, small size... depends on the scale of operation".

## D. WE DON'T HAVE ANY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

"We don't have any organizational chart. Which is why we do not have much planning. But we do know who is in charge. We don't really have the chart".

## E. WE DON'T EVALUATE PERFORMANCE

"As for my brother and I--we are family. And in family, we don't have this kind of meeting, weekly or monthly or call for meeting. The European management has performance evaluation. It is bad. People do not do good job, they got report. Five directors will have evaluation meetings. If the managing director is not good, they replace. In our case, no evaluation. We just continue".

## F. WE SIT DOWN AND TALK OVER PROBLEMS

"If we have any problems, we talk. My brother or I would talk about what had happened. Something like catch upon. Sit down, just talk".

## G. WE HAVE TO LOOK AFTER THE FAMILY

"If my brother and I have conflicts, sometimes if you don't like it, you just go out for a few days or don't see each other. There is nothing very serious. If you are not happy with each other, just go off, or maybe leave the office for just one or two days. But because this business is family's, you have to look after the family. Family is the tie".

## H. WE ARE SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE WE DO BUSINESS PERSONALLY

"We are successful because we personally go and do business ourselves. I personally go and do business myself. I run about. Supposing you are the owner of this company, you go and do yourself sales, I think you will be more successssful. That means we have to work very hard. I can work at night till nine o'clock. If you employ somebody, do you think he will stay and work till nine o'clock? No, he just wants to go home; so how to be very successful?"

## I. CHINESE IS VERY HARDWORKING



"Yes. I am hardworking. Now I am a little bit relaxed because I have salesmen to help me. Before, no. I was the owner here. I was a salesman too. I go around to do sales. I carry big bags of sample. This is your business, that means you have different thinking on how you do it. You must make money, you must do sales, no matter how late it is, could be nine o'clock, may be midnight. If people want to buy, you have to sell. This is the Chinese style, very hardworking".

#### J. WE STARTED SMALL

"Before we only had my brother, myself and one clerk, and two workers doing the packing job. We had only five staffs. Three staffs, my brother and I, five people. We had a very small shop in a side street. That was where we start. Very small".

"Another successful factor is the way we first started the business. When Western people start their business, they got big capital. We Chinese have only small capital. So small capital with hardwork, we get very small salary. Just enough for the family. For the start we have not much money. So we have to live with small income. I think nobody can accept that; only Chinese people do. For five to six years, I was earning only \$300 dollars monthly salary. But the only thing because if you work for people, you are always drawing salary. So you start your business, no doubt you get less, but one day your business will be successful, and you will get a lot of money. That is what we are thinking. That is another factor why we are so successful; because we don't spend so much for the start".

#### K. IF THE WORKER IS NOT HAPPY, HE CAN TALK TO US

"If they are not happy, they can talk to us. If somebody says he is not good, maybe he is still not happy. He can talk to us. But the person who is in charge, if he comes direct, the center person will not be happy. If the supervisor doesn't like the person although he performs a good job, he will say he is not good. It is very unfair. The workers can complain: "I do good job. You can see my performance, but my senior say I am not good'. So he can talk to the superior".



L. IF SOMEONE COMPLAINS, WE DO THE OBSERVATION OURSELVES

"Sometimes you have to watch. Somebody complain that they are not good. We don't take action. We do the observation ourselves. Because we are in and out most of the time. We have to look at these people. Don't just listen to some people. We must do our observation".

M. WE USUALLY DON'T SACK PEOPLE EXCEPT FOR DISHONESTY

"Usually in our company we seldom sack people unless a serious mistake was made; for instance, when they steal thing. Dishonesty is something we don't like to have in our company. That is the most important thing. Other than that, a little laziness, or using too much of the telephone is tolerable. When they are very slow in job, we can tell them they must hurry up; to finish the job, not to delay. They understand. When we, the top management go and tell them: 'Please'. But as for dishonesty, we have emphasized to them that such behavior can not be tolerated".

N. THE STAFF HAVE GOOD WELFARE

"The staff have good welfare. They have medical leave, annual leave, bonus--these are the few welfare, They have CPF (Central Provident Fund) too. They are working alright. We also care for them by taking interest in the working environment. When the weather is too hot, we have airconditioning, we have cleaners to clean for them. My factory upstairs is also quite clean. To plan for a factory, we must leave enough space, prevent fire. We try to do it according to the laid out plan. We follow the labor law".

O. WE SPEAK IN HOKKIEN

"I think usually we speak in Hokkien. Because the two bosses are Hokkien. We speak Hokkien. Actually quite good in the sense depends on what type of business. Now we employ about a hundred people. We become just a medium size".

P. WE DON'T HAVE GENERAL MEETING BECAUSE WE SEE EACH OTHER IN AND OUT EVERYDAY

"We don't have a general meeting because we see each other in and out everyday. There is record in book if you want to have a look. That is why we don't have a monthly or weeking meeting".

Q. IF YOUR ORGANIZATION IS SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE, IT IS BETTER TO DO IT THE CHINESE WAY

"The European management is good if we give it a try provided the organization is growing quite big. It can work. But if your organization is small and medium size, I still think that it is better to do it the Chinese way. I try to follow the Western way to computerize but it was difficult. At that time I suggested that we use computer especially for the account books. Before that, we do it in Chinese style, Chinese character. So I suggested to my brother if we could change it. He said: 'No, I couldn't understand English. Why do you want to change?' There is some difficulty. Unless, of course, the young people take over. They are English educated or highly educated. They may want a change. But it may prove to be successful or it may prove to be a failure. We don't know".

R. IF YOU GROW BIG, YOU LOST CONTROL. VERY HARD TO KNOW EACH OTHER

"That is why I said if it is small and medium, it is still better to stay in this way. If you grow big, you lose control. If you have five hundred staffs, it is very hard to know each other. Before we start with five to eight staffs. I mean everyday we made contact".

CHINESE MANAGEMENT AND EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT.....

A. CHINESE DON'T HAVE LONG PLANNING. THEY CAN PLAN IN THEIR HEAD

"We Chinese, you know, tend to look at short-term planning. We don't really have long-term planning. Whether or not we can make money and for how long, we don't know? As you know, the Chinese way of business is to look at whether business is going to be good for this month, for the next three or five months? We do not look at three or five years down the road".

"Because people in Chinese management are usually not highly educated. So how do they do planning? They can plan, not on paper or through computer programming, but in their head. They do!".

"The European management have a better planning in advance. They look at things maybe three years or five years ahead".

B. WESTERN MANAGEMENT ARE QUITE SUCCESSFUL. BUT THEY CAN'T CHALLENGE CHINESE WAY OF BUSINESS

"But will the European management be very successful? Personally, I think they are quite successful. You know, twenty-five years ago, I worked with the Emporium Company. They had a good management. They had good planning. Most of the Chinese companies in Singapore--they don't have planning; not planning on paper, maybe planning in their head. What they think they don't put on paper as to what needs to be done. For the European management, how many percent of sales they expect to increase? They predict. But will that prediction come through? We don't know. Over the past twenty-five years, most of the European-style companies are going down in Singapore. They have got planning, but they can't challenge the Chinese way of business".

C. WESTERNERS USE A LOT OF EXPENSES. CHINESE DON'T

"Because the first thing I think of in Chinese management is the expenses. No doubt European organization or company have good planning, but they have to go through so many hierarchy of personnel. I think they use a lot of expenses. They may make, let's say, one million dollars, but they have eight hundred thousand dollars worth of expenses. So the net profit amounts to only two hundred thousand dollars. But in Chinese style of management, the organization may make half a million dollars, but if their expenses amount to only two hundred and fifty dollars, they would still make two hundred and fifty."

D. IN CHINESE MANAGEMENT, THE BOSS CAN DIRECT, ANTICIPATES QUICKLY AND REACTS QUICKLY. EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT TAKES A LONGER TIME, A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE TO SIT DOWN ON IT

"European management takes long time, a lot of people have to wait on it. And another point is: in the Chinese way of business, the boss more or less directs. They can anticipate and react to changes very quickly. In the European management, the top management are the Managing Directors. To carry out certain decisions that they had made, they have to go through so many stages. And if they are not successful in their attempts, they have to go back again in the decision making process. It takes up a lot of time. But in the Chinese way, I have only the sales people and myself. If they do like how certain things are done, alright we change. So we can have quicker changes..... it's direct because we don't have to involve so many people. I think this is a better way. It is faster. You don't have to wait. In the European management, by the time the first person says "no good", you have to go through another person, and another person. It finally reaches the top management, they make the decision, and then they have to pass it down again. It takes a long time. During the time that this decision travels between these six people, a lot of other people will have to wait on it".

#### E. THE EUROPEAN COMPANY, THE GAP BETWEEN THE TOP MANAGEMENT AND LOWER IS VERY WIDE

"Five to six hundred staffs. I used to work for a European company for eight to nine years. I didn't know who the chairman was. We never saw him. Even when you walked in the office, you didn't know who you saw. It was very bad. Here they know who are the Managing Director, or chairman. Chinese style. More closer. In the European style, the gap between the top management and the lower ranks is very wide. It is bad. Here, if you want to complain something, in the Western management, say if you are a salesman, you want to complain something. First you go to the sales executive. Even I cannot complain directly to my sales manager. Because they don't see you. They only see the executive because executives are under their control. So if anything they listen only to the executives. The sales executive will talk to the sales manager. The manager may talk to the director. So the gap is very big. But I don't know how far a gap is good or not good. But before at where I worked, I didn't like my executive. He was very rude and he didn't care. I said: 'If you don't care, why should I care for you?'. I said: 'If you are my senior and you don't care, what

makes you think I must care for you?' That is when I said: 'Alright, forget about the job, I resigned'. In this kind of case, I cannot complain to the sales manager, or to the director".

F. WE ARE MORE CLOSE TO THE STAFFS. I CAN GO TALK TO THEM DIRECTLY. NOT THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE

"Here, we talk. We are more close to the staffs. Because we can talk to each other. I can go to them and say: 'Get me some coffee, or do this thing for me'. Talk directly to them. European style, no. They want something, they have to go through so many people before they get the thing. They don't talk to you. For example, if you are in charge and I have a complaint to make; the director will ask the secretary to take my complaint from me. In my instance, I can go directly to get from them. I don't need someone to get it from the person who is in charge. We can go direct. I can see them. Just now you saw me standing outside talking to them. There is no need to say you have to come and see me, or that I don't go and see you; all this type of things call--attitudes. That is why it is more close here. The boss could stand there, and the staff would sit down, and we would talk to them. It doesn't matter".

G. WE DON'T HAVE RECORD. EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT KEEPS RECORDS OF THEIR MEETINGS

"We don't have record of what we said in the meeting. Something good and something bad. You know the European style of business or management. Everything in the meeting they record. But Chinese, just say, no record. After that you can say you didn't say. I find that to have a record is better, so there won't be argument".

"Nothing is recorded. Since only two people can make decisions, it is quite easy. If there is conflict, it's only between two people. In a big organization of, let's say, twelve directors. A small conflict can cause the twelve to be fighting. Whereas if there are only two and these two disagree; alright, we decide what is the best thing to do. Then we do it".

AS A MANAGER, I AM....



#### A. I AM MORE CONCERNED ABOUT SALES

"I have been in sales for many years. So I know. A lot of people just do sales, they don't know. For our house brand, I just took over in 1980 Dec. Before, I was the man who was always carrying big luggages out for marketing in overseas. I went to many countries. I might have spent only five months in Singapore, seven months out of the countries. So at that time, the Singapore business, I was not able to interfere. My brother and sales manager, they failed my business. I was very angry. I took over. The business has since improved by about one thousand percent".

"I am more concerned about the sales. Finance side, we must collect, give some pressure to the sales people to collect money. Accounting, I mostly leave it to the office manager. I don't pay too much attention. May be she can report to me monthly. I do it every month because anytime I find something wrong, we can quickly check. Sales must be greater than purchase. If purchase is greater than sales, something is wrong. I think my main thing is to watch sales and purchase. ....We can't go in detail, but I have to know the main point. This is my Chinese way. I don't know anything about account... Can not be exact, but roughly 80% correct".

#### B. WHEN YOU DO SALES

"When we do sales, it is very important that we know the product that we are going to sell. In big organization, they do advertisement. Then you must study your own product. And you must find out the price structure of other brands. Then, quality of your product. The outlet you are going to sell. And then, another important point is the payment you must collect. If you only know how to sell and don't know how to collect, this is also not good. Actually, to become a very successful business men, they must have three qualities: They must know how to purchase; They must know how to sell; and they must know how to collect. If a man has these three quality, I think he will be very successful. So these qualities are important for sales".

#### C. TRUST



"Trust is important. In that word, that means trust people that trust you. How about you trusting people? Not everybody is good. So in accounts collection you must judge how good the clients are before you would give them the account. If you give the accounts to a wrong party, that means you will not get back your money. I think trust is very important. But trust is in ourselves. That means you owe people, you must pay them. So we gain confidence, trust from other people to supply us with goods. If you are going to sell to people, that means we will have to trust them. So we must judge how trustworthy these people are for us. You see, trust is important. It depends on how you work".

"That means you are going to trust people. You must have this kind of quality of knowing how to judge people; whether they are worthy of an account, or to give them support of finance. So you must watch. If you don't know how to watch, you may mistrust people. After that you can't collect money from these people, then you suffer. You must have this type of quality".

#### D. I TRUST PEOPLE BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE JUDGEMENT

"I am quite a careful man but I trust people. We have to do some judgement. Because Singapore business base alot on credit. Other countries, they demand for cash before they supply you. Singaporeans, most of the business is on credit. So you must study".

"Judging quality, there can be many ways. I don't quite believe in look. May be you take 15% on how the person look. You can see people smiling, friendly, and look so gentle, but he could be a big trouble. We can't judge. First we meet new people, we have to talk to them a lot. Make them talk. We talk to them and make them talk a lot. They start to hint out".

#### E. I SEE MY CUSTOMER PERSONALLY

"For every request for a new account in my company, I must see them before they can be issued. I would personally go and talk to them. In the European company, if you ask the Managing Director to see the customer, they won't because it is too low class. I personally go and see the customer. I do it myself. All the new dealers I must see them before we can give them

credit. Sometimes if I am free in the afternoon. I go around and see the dealers".

F. MY JOB IS....

"Usually, morning I am in the office. Maybe after lunch, I will be out in the market. Visiting dealers, or have a look at their sales activities. Usually in the afternoons, I am not in the office. I am not involved in the office much. Maybe sign checks, sign receipts, small minor things, then talk to people, the supplier. Usually supplier can see me in the morning time. But afternoon time I will be out in the market, have a look, talk to the dealer, have a cup of coffee or have lunch with them".

#### STORY 4: T.EB.(Elder brother of T.YB. Old age group)

##### INTRODUCTION

"I am the Managing Director of my company. I first started in 1969. I started working since I was very young. After a period of time, I started to go into partnership with other people. Partnership for a period of time. I came out to do my own and created this company".

"This business started in 1969. My brother was working in a Western company. He is five years younger than I am. He studied in the Polytechnic. He didn't want to continue and wanted to look for a job. I told him that 'find those job that you can do business. One day if I need you, we can be partners'. In 1969 I pulled him out, and we two brothers started a partnership".

"We started from small. When he started working , I felt that doing business has to be with your own people. We have to have partner. At the beginning, we had only little capital".

##### CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS.....

##### A. CHINESE MANAGEMENT EMPHASIZES ON RELATIONS

"That time I started a factory. I hired my niece to be the typist, and the other person to do the account. And one person running around doing errands. In 1971, I started the factory. There were about eight people in the factory. We Chinese management, generally, emphasize on human relations. Modern management does not emphasize that. If you do something wrong, you have to leave. Chinese management gives chance to people. If he made mistake, forgive him. Give him a chance to learn and improve. He probably will change. In modern management, if you were wrong, you had to go".

##### B. CHINESE EMPHASIZE ON TRUST 信用 (XIN YONG). TRUST IS THE FOUNDATION, THE CAPITAL

"The Chinese way of doing things and the Western way of doing things. Chinese people doing business

emphasize on trust 信用 (Xin Yong). For example, I went to the bank to loan money. The bank didn't want to loan me because they didn't trust me. Now because we started the business, we know more. Bank could trust us now".

"All the people in the world are neither all good nor all bad. Not all Chinese are good, neither are all bad. In our Chinese culture, we rely on trust. Singaporean, I know particularly, stresses trust. We are very glad to trust people and to be trusted. In the past few years, there were a few companies which had to close down their business because they lost their trust and reputation".

"Trust is the foundation. You may have the capability, but if your foundation is not good, it equals to nothing. Doing business is trust 信用 (Xin Yong). Trust is very important. If you don't have trust (Xin Yong), it implies that you don't have the capital. Our capital is trust 信用 (Xin Yong). Capital is necessary. Trust 信用 (Xin Yong) is very necessary too".

"Trust 信用 (Xin Yong) means when you are in the market doing business with other people, your account has to be very clear. Keep to your promise. If you say: 'I am going to return the money to you', you must return. The most you can delay for is another week. You must return. This is trust 信用 (Xin Yong). It is very important.

#### C. I HAVE TO HAVE CONTRACT

"For our present situation, those who are more modernized, I think they have contracts. A lot still don't have. But for my way of working, when I do work, I have to have a contract with the other person. The least that he has to do is write and sign in black and white. The way I work is 先小人,后君子 (Xian Xiao Ren, Hou Jun Zi). We talk till we are satisfied. Don't gossip after. The way I work is that I talk about contract and conditions first. For some people, it doesn't matter. I see many people end up with quarrel because of this. It is not good".

#### D. EMOTION 人情 (REN CHIN)

"I have a worker, he has worked with us for very long. He is getting old. We don't have many workers. Aging are not many. Sometimes we have to be easy going. He is our relative. Within our ability, our organization will not mind to have one more person or less one person to take this salary. We give him. There are always this kind of problems. This is a matter of emotion 情 (Chin). The issue of 人情 (Ren Chin). The way I treat people is like this. A person who works with me till he is old, I will allow him to continue. Unless he is too old that he can't work anymore. I will give him an amount of money, ask him to go back. But there are good and bad. I think Western organizations are the same. When he is old, ask him to retire. Like now I am hiring an Indian. When he first came to work for us, he was already a retired worker. Because our company is not too big, I wouldn't mind this at all. He has worked with me for about ten years now. Now he is about sixty something years old, but still very strong. However an old man need a nap in the afternoon. I let him do that. This Indian man has become like one of the family members to me. Sometimes when my sons have not come back from school, he will ask the driver or other workers to fetch them. This is a matter of emotion (Ren Chin). If we want to retire him, we can do that. He is too old. But think it over, since he can continue working, he can work till he dies. It doesn't matter. Not many though. One or two. It should be alright. But in the Western companies, they will be law by law. Force you to retire and hire someone younger. But for us, we will see. If he can do the work, we will allow him to do it".

#### E. 人情 (REN CHIN) AND CONTRACT

"Of course. Emotion is emotion, Ren Chin is Ren Chin, contract is contract. Contract still needs to be carried out. If you want to talk about emotion 人情 (Ren Chin), yes, but not too much. Too much is not good either".

#### F. LOGIC OR EMOTION

"Logic or emotion, it all depends on situations. How he performs in the organization, from the beginning to now. If he is good, we can forgive him a little bit more. We cannot totally follow our own principle in dealing with him. In this way he has to retire. Like



this Indian man. Therefore a person shouldn't demand the same thing as other people. There are advantage and disadvantage. The disadvantage is sometimes there are too many. When other see him do that, they think they can do the same".

"For example, the other day, my brother was saying to my son. He said that he was wrong here and there. My brother also told me. After that I asked my son to come in. I told him: 'Your uncle said you. You can't keep it in your heart. You have to accept it'. I am understanding. If I am not understanding, I would not allow my brother to do that because I am the big shareholder. Then there will be problems. But we have to agree based upon logic but not emotion 幫理不幫親 (Bang Li Bu Bang Chin)".

#### G. IT DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION

"The way I operate is not based upon when I say yes. It is yes; When I say no, it is no. It depends on the situation".

#### H. OUR OLD STYLE IS TO BE INVOLVED IN EVERYTHING

"In terms of personnel, the old management will not have personnel department, or departmentalize into different units. Our old style is to be involved in everything. We know everything from top to bottom. In modern management, if I delegate you a task, I will not bother how you and I will not know what you do in your department. In our old style, we need to know little bits of everything. I will listen to everybody".

#### I. CHINESE ARE HARDWORKING

"We Chinese are successful in business, from my point of view, it is because we are very hardworking. For other people, they may be hardworking too, however, they have fixed working hours. We Chinese do not calculate about the time".

#### J. OLD STYLE OF MANAGEMENT WILL INTERVENE INTO FAMILY

"I see old style of management will intervene into family. If the worker's family have any problems, we sure will help if we could".



# K. WE DON'T HAVE AN ORGANIZATION CHART

"We drew one organizational chart before, but sometimes we leave it aside. I didn't pay attention. We don't actually have one".

MY ORGANIZATION IS .....

## A. MY ORGANIZATION IS A COMBINATION OF MODERN AND TRADITIONAL

"I would say my organization is a combination of both. I hire graduates, however, I want to know how they do. For example, if my staff made a mistake, we would forgive him. We would give him a chance. This is traditional. Modern management has no such thing. If you are in fault, you must go. We Chinese, we have to forgive him, sympathize him. Because it is only for that one year. He still score 90 points. Why sack him? In modern management, once you make a mistake, you have to go. In my view, if I am the chairperson of the company, I will keep him, educate him, talk to him, and give him a chance. He may do better. I often have this idea that, some of my staff, they left and came back. Some companies don't take them back. I do. I told them: 'If you come back, you have to do it well. You went out there to find your way, good or bad you know it. Now you come back, you have to serve the company'".

## B. OUR ORGANIZATION IS SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE

"Our organization is small and medium size. Not too small, not too big. Medium".

## C. I WOULD LIKE IT TO BE PUBLIC LISTED

"Earlier on, someone came to talk to me. I think we will think about it in the future. If we could, I would like to be public listed. This kind of company, if we don't want, we can leave the staff behind. The manager could be hired".

## D. THE ELDER BROTHER AND YOUNGER BROTHER

"We are the directors. I am older than he is. He has to give way to me a little bit. He of course allows me to do that. My brother comes second in command. Then we have administration department to control the

production department. At the factory side, we have factory manager. Then we have production department and every department has supervisors. And we have store keeper. We also have two security guards, one for the day and one for the night".

"We two are brothers, and I am the elder. When I bought my house, I bought two. One for him, one for me. The way I treat my brother, he is the only brother, and we have been in partnership for nineteen years. Of course we have disagreements, but we don't keep it in our hearts. I believe that happens to every company".

#### E. THE BIG SHAREHOLDER AND SMALL SHAREHOLDER

"If this thing happens, of course, someone has to give way. Of course there is a big shareholder and a small shareholder. Actually we big shareholder is easily supporting the small shareholder. We do not want that much. We as the big shareholder, we have to give way. Explain to him not to misunderstand each other. To be agreeable".

#### F. MY NEPHEW AND SON ARE IN THE SALES DEPARTMENT

"In our sales department, we have salesmen, my nephew is there. There are seven people in the sales department. My son is in the sales department too".

#### G. MY SON

"My son presently I still let him learn. Now he is in the local sales, sales department. But I am planning after the Chinese New Year, I will pull him back to my side. Because more or less, you should let him learn and learn it the hard way".

#### H. THE ADMINISTRATION MANAGER

"Just now before I came out, I was talking to the manager about other people's salary. She can give some opinions. The other day I had some argument with her. I recalled the incidence. She said she didn't keep it in heart. I said: 'You have to understand that you have been here for five years. I know you as a person. You have to understand me. Sometimes I am very bored, therefore I become a little bit hot tempered. Hope that

you don't mind'. Among colleagues... I treat her as my colleague... there are times we would be like that. Even with your parents too. We have to bring it out, explain to her. Don't keep it in heart".

#### I. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

"For local business, my brother is in charge. For small portion, we do differentiate, but are not able to differentiate it all. Purchasing. Local purchasing is done by my brother. Export is done by me".

"Around three or four o'clock, when I am in the office myself, I think about what I have to do. After planning, and after work, sometimes the office manager stays back, Around seven o'clock, she and I will talk. I will share with her what to do".

#### J. LANGUAGE USED

"Among staffs sometimes in English. It is mixed. It is the same in the government agency. I always feel that the Singaporean government doesn't see the importance of Mandarin".

#### K. POWER STRUGGLE PROBLEM

"We Chinese organizations have power struggle problems; often time it is related to family. Sometimes the family members of both parties, the problems of the wives, some like to intervene, some want to dominate with more power. The person who is in control of power sure will say something to her, then she will go and complain. For example, my brother's wife. She will go and tell my brother to split the shares. Things happen in this kind of situations. Because of the family environment, some family can't be open minded".

#### L. CONFLICT BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE CAN'T THINK OPENLY

"But some people just can't think openly. A person working in an organization, when you are more capable, of course you have better reward. Sometimes the other family member do not see it right. A lot of things starts like this. This is called rigid sighted. If both sides can be more understanding, there should be not much problems".

## M. THERE IS INEQUALITY IN PARTNERSHIP

"At the beginning, I was in partnership with other people twice. They were not successful. The problem of unsuccessful was because human beings are not equal. Not only with friends, sometimes even with brothers and sisters. There is inequality. Of course you are more intelligent than others. Some people will be jealous. Among the shareholders, it is the same. Among the three, four or five shareholders, of course, one is the general manager. You can't have five general managers. But some family members will say something. 'You have the capability, why do you have to partner with them?' If he can't tolerate, he would want to split out. Then things will happen. You are a Chinese, you are brought up in a Chinese family, you understand how we Chinese do things. But it can't be helped. Among the ten brothers, the parents can't love them all the same. They love all, but three or four children who are more capable, you love them more. It is not love them more, but care about them more. Those who are not obedient, how to take care of them? It is the same logic".

AS A MANAGER, I AM.....

### A. I HAVE TO MAKE PEOPLE FEEL CONCERNED AND APPROACHABLE

"Not all people are good nor all are bad. The most important thing is to make people feel concerned and approachable".

### B. I HAVE TO KNOW MANY THINGS

"I almost do it all. I have to know everything. In Cantonese saying, 'kick it all in one leg'. We divide into different departments, I want them to report to me. They must report to inform me. If in his work, something that he can't resolve, he has to approach me".

### C. I HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL IN STAFF'S WELFARE

"Like the staff's welfare. You need to be very careful in the staff's welfare. It is a difficult issue. I have workers who have worked here for many years. It is not easy to have someone who can work in the factory for years. Those who have worked here

longer, we should treat them better. Those who just come in, also treat them well".

#### D. I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF PEOPLE

"Well. I had someone who came to work for only a few days, his father passed away. We have a practice here, that is to donate money to the family. Everyone donate a little bit. Company also donate some. However, after the funeral, he said he wanted to quit the job. My manager was real angry. People were so nice to him, he turned people down. I was angry. Everybody else was angry. However, this kind of case is not many. Nevertheless, in terms of sentiment and in terms of logic, he shouldn't have done that. Sometimes I feel very disappointed and say to myself: 'I am not going to do it again'. But I say it only. I still have to take care of people. Last night I had dinner with a worker who had worked here for four years. He said he did not feel well in the past few days. I told him not to worry and to see a specialist. The company will be responsible for his medical fee. We are so good to him. In turn he will be good to the company. This is an obligation".

#### E. I WOULDN'T LISTEN TO GOSSIP

"Some employees like to gossip. The most important thing is to depend on oneself. Like that. If the other party, like the senior staffs says something about my brother. I wouldn't listen. I will pay attention. To watch whether there is such thing happening. If there is no such thing happening, why should we listen to him?"

"In our organization, of course there are people who like to gossip here and there. Of course. But we don't listen to him. The most important thing is we have to know how to think. We are brothers for so many years, or shareholders for so many years. Of course we have to understand each other, trust each other. Don't be suspicious. Those that needs attention, we pay attention. This is for the company's future sake".

#### F. THE WAY I MANAGE MY TIME

"I am like that. For example, there is a meeting at the community center tonight. I promised you to come



here, and I had to go to the Garment Association's meeting, and I told my wife that I would have dinner with her. So I told the other side that I was not going for their meeting. If I went there tonight, I would not be able to come to meet you. I have promised you many many times. I feel embarassed. I didn't mean not to come, sometimes, I can't do anything to relieve myself from all that. You have to forgive me".

#### G. THE WAY I MAKE DECISION

"Some times I like to do this. For example, I have something to do. I have made the decision in my heart. I will discuss with those senior staffs, ask them for their opinions. But they may know. They say the similar things. If there are different opinion. I have to watch. I will not impose my way. It depends on the situation".

#### H. I ALLOW THE STAFF MORE

"For example my staff. I allow them more. He is certainly more happy. He should respect us. If we argue with them that we should get hundred, they get ninety-nine, of course they won't like it. It is not that we are afraid of him. This is generally, a way to establish good relationships. I am the boss. When they work overtime till seven, eight o'clock. I show my concern. I would ask them whether they want some dinner. I would make tea and bring snack for them. Is it that we are afraid of them? No. We take care of them. It is for the work, for the company. We have to do it. The staff will be happier if the boss is so nice to them. Different organizations have different ways of doing things".

#### I. MY JOB IS .....

"Every morning I wake up early at six something. I will wash up, and go for exercise. After exercising, at around eight o'clock, I will go to the office. In the office, I will sometimes read newspaper, take a shower. After the shower, I will take my breakfast. After breakfast, I will go downstairs to inspect, to watch what happen. This is my life every morning. Almost the same. In lunch time, sometimes I have lunch appointment. If not, I will have lunch at the factory. After lunch I will go back to the office to see whether



there is anything to do. If not, I will go out to talk with friends. Till about three or four o'clock, I will come back to the office and stay till about six something and go home. Sometimes I talk with the staff just to keep in touch. Sometimes in the evening, I go to the association or community center for meetings. Around nine o'clock, I will come back home".

"I arrange job assignments to different departments. Sometimes I sign checks, documents. Sometimes they have problems to consult me. Decisions to make. We have arranged the tasks. But for decision making, they will ask me. Generally, important letters, since I don't understand English, they will explain it to me. Or I will suggest to them how to write it. I trust them that they will read it to me when they finish it. If I have a new contract, I will start purchase or order materials or other things. I have many telephones. I told you this is 一脚踢 (Cantonese dialect) 'kicking everything in one leg'. Now we are still not able to departmentalize, most of the time, I do it myself".

#### J. I SPEAK DIALECT. I CAN'T SPEAK ENGLISH

"Can't help it. The boss cannot speak in English, they have to speak to me in Mandarin or dialect. Some speak to me in Mandarin".

#### K. WE TAKE FROM THE SOCIETY, WE CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIETY

"I also have another idea. We in the Chinese tradition believe that we take from the society, we contribute to the society. I feel that before I didn't have money, therefore I didn't have money to spend. Now I spend some money, I don't feel that I am poor. Another point is that when you spend money, it might bring you more. But everyone has a different thinking".

#### METAPHOR - ORGANIZATION IS LIKE A FAMILY

"An organization may be like a family because the big and small has to be cooperative. Family is the same. If the family members or children are not obedient, how to be a family? 家和万事兴 (Jia He Wan She Shin). In your organization, if the staffs and workers are not cooperating with you, how are you going

to be prosperous? It is the same. Similarly, the way we take care of our staffs is like the way we take care of our children. You have to send them to school, feed them, and ask them to take showers. The same. There are conflicts in the family. It is the same in the organization. But in the organization, the blood-bond relation is kind of equal to when the staff stays in the organization for a long time, he is loyal to the organization".

YOU ALLOW YOUR OWN PEOPLE TO EAT YOU, BUT NOT THE  
OUTSIDER

"We Chinese thinking is like this: You allow your own people to eat (cheat) you, but not the outsider. If your own brother cheats you a little bit of money, it doesn't matter. Because he is your own brother. If it is the outsider who cheated you, wah, I think you will be outraged. I think generally everybody thinks the same. Some people said, 'one person two hearts'. Own people eat it, you don't feel it. But if outsider bullies you a little bit, you would jump up. That is human being, biases. Not only Chinese, everybody has it too."

CONCLUSION

A. TRAIN UP SUCCESSOR

"My brother is only five years younger than I am. Now I have people in mind that I want to train up. But to train up a person is not that easy. It has to be slow".

B. MAY SELL IT AWAY IF THE SECOND GENERATION IS NOT  
INTERESTED

"He is my son. If he knows, I certainly will pass it to him. But I have another thought. I always tell my brother, one day, if our younger generation is not interested in this business, or has no talents in this field, After five years, when I am 60 years old, we may sell it away. If he doesn't know, it doesn't help if you pass it on to him. If you pass it on to him, you would create harm for him. I'd rather sell it away. Get the money back and distribute it to them. Isn't it better that way? If you pass it on to him, and he can't do it, it would create a mess. Isn't it worse?"

### C. MODERNIZED

"Of course we have to use a little bit of modernized expertise to help us in planning. Modernized expertise means specialised talents. Presently, we don't have any strong need. Now the most advanced person is our administrative manager. She is a graduate in Business Administration. I think now in our organization, it is enough. To further develop, till another time, another step, then we can look for a consultant. For the development of Chinese company, when it is necessary, modernized. But if there is no necessity, don't. It is unnecessary to spend that kind of money to hire another new person. But when there is a need. You should do that. It depends on your need. But it also depends on the nature of the field".

### D. IT IS NOT SURE THAT THE WEST IS ALWAYS RIGHT, AND APPLICABLE, THE EAST MAY NOT BE ALL WRONG

"It is this way. It is not sure that the West is always right, and applicable. The East may not be all wrong. If the East is not right, how will the ten billions of people in China survive? It has its advantages and disadvantages. If the West is all right, it will suck the whole world. Some people said to me: 'Mr Teo, you are not right'. I said: 'You can't say that. It depends on the situation. It depends on the timing. You said I was wrong at the beginning, not really. Now I may be wrong. I feel it'. It is very difficult to say".

## STORY 5 : H (Old age group)

### INTRODUCTION

"I am the Managing Director of the company. I started since I was very young. My father was in the wood industry. He partnered with other people. My uncle took care of me. After my father died, the company wasn't doing well. That time I was only ten. I said to my uncle that we should combine the two companies. If we did not join, it would be very hard because both were small. I originally had less power, because I was the least shareholder. Now the old man has retired, he appointed me. Once this old man stepped down, our founder also died. Left me and another old one, he is retired. He is ninety plus. He asked me to buy his shares because he has confidence in me. He told me to better buy it, because he felt that the third generation can't do better than I".

"The organization really is only forty to fifty people. Four departments's people-in-charge. Our major business is still exporting. Sometimes, we may not even have a business a whole day, because we don't have shipment. When there is shipment, there is export".

CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS.....

A. WE SHOULD HAVE MORE TRUST. TRUST IS THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC

"My idea is that in our business, we cannot be too conservative. Family style would definitely be read out. We have to be more liberal. We must trust other people. That is why our timber industry behavior is like the wood industry, like rubber, palm oil, if we don't trust you, we don't talk to you at all. We trust you, you take the thing, we still support you. In this wood industry, it is this kind of customers. It is a characteristic, a uniqueness. Doing timber industry is like this, foreigner also come to Singapore to buy, because our credibility is very high. Once you agreed, don't care how your price rises. We definitely deliver".

B. TALK TO THE SAME LEVEL PEOPLE

"Because there are many routine, many regular customers. I am still in charge of the foreign buyers, because it is better for me to show up. As for China and Hong Kong too, he wants to see your position. I must go myself. If you are chairman, he finds a chairman to talk with you. If you are a manager, he will find just any production manager to talk with you, that is why there is this problem".

#### C. NO CONTRACT, THE RISK IS BIG

"We don't have contract, nothing, we can also do business on phone. This Indonesian called, said timber business temporary cannot be run because raining. It is very risky. You confirmed on the phone, but contract has not signed. But we already give you commitment. If the timber industry cannot produce wood, your own industry cannot produce, then you have to buy from others. It is very terrible. That is why the risk is big. Earning money is easy, but losing money is easy too".

#### D. A LOT OF THINGS STILL NEED TO BE DONE MYSELF. CHIN LI CHIN WUAY

"We are a small company, a lot of things still need to be done myself, small and middle size company mostly must 親力親為 (Chin Li Chin Wuay), which means to keep in contact with foreign countries, because timber is still export orientated".

#### E. MONTHLY REPORT

"We have fixed date, at least a report per month, that is why I can go to China, foreign countries. I can read the report to know what is going on".

#### F. MEETING IS NOT DEFINITE

"Meeting is not definite. We don't have any regular meetings".

#### G. SOME KIND OF IMPLICIT NORMS

"We have some kind of implicit norms, that means we follow some kind of logic, everyone follows a work pattern, everyone can cooperate together, you don't do things beyond your power. But their work are really



simple, now everyone knows their own role. Allow them to have initiative, those who can do better, give them more".

#### H. NEGOTIATION IS TO LISTEN FIRST

"Sometimes you have to know the approaches. We are not playing dirty or under table. But they are convinced. So they have to give way. The negotiation is that try not to talk. Listen first. Because the more you talk, you have the gap. So people know, it is like a balloon. It is better you watch after. Also you must be humble, must be accomodating to people. May be he is better and he is wiser than you. Why not listen to him? Then you can see what he listened can tell you".

#### I. CHINESE GONG FU. ONE NEEDS TO RESERVE

"Like Chinese Gong Fu. You know Gong Fu, you cannot expose everything. You must keep something. Otherwise, you will be killed. The Chinese value, you have to have reservation. Even if you are successful, you are in the top, you have to be reserved".

#### J. WE TRY TO CULTIVATE IF HE IS VERY GOOD

"My idea is that try to cultivate if he is very good. He can be more than a good employee, let him go. Give him more free hand. He can maximize his talent. A lot of people would say 'you cannot go, I increase your pay'. Sometimes it is not necessary. Before that, I had to go over the places, Indonesia, Malaysia. One time, I got a car accident. Nearly killed myself. I started to think whether it is worth it. Because you are a policy maker. Later on we hire a purchasing manager. Later on he became a boss also. So I told him that you can start your business. We support you. But you have to report me everything. We still have control over him".

#### K. PARTNERSHIP - ALI-BABA BUSINESS

"There are a lot of funny things in the timber business, like AliBaBa business. Ali is Malay. BaBa is Chinese. Ali, he got the license, or he got the power. But BaBa, say if BaBa do not join Ali, he cannot go to Indonesia. Ali will do the get the license. Actually, the boss is Baba. We call it Ali-BaBa business".



## L. SUCCESSION IS A PROCESS

"Succession is not a problem. This is a process. Chinese say, 生老病死 (Sheng Lao Bing Si). This is natural. You have grown older. You have to get somebody to take over but according to their talents and interests. First is the interest, the second is the talents. Like my second son. Hotel management. He is very happy. My elder son is studying Aerospace. Nobody likes timber. I cannot force them. Have to look for a successor. So if you find them, you cultivate them. Then try them in part of the works. Because human being has his physiological problems, there are high tide and low tide. Now I am 55 plus, still very young. But one person must have new that replaces old, until a certain time he must give up, have successors to take over".

## M. BIG ORGANIZATIONS HAVE PROBLEMS TO LOOK AFTER THEIR TAIL

"Power struggle starts with conflict. These big companies think that they are growing up. They have to diversify. They have to keep on growing because of high borrowing of loan from bank or financial institution. They have no way. They have to grow. Chinese says 头大钓不到尾 (Toa Ta Dao Bu Dao Wei). You cannot look after your tail because your head is too big. Very good Chinese quoting. You are Chinese educated, you understand. Toa Ta Thao Pu Tao Wuay 头大金钓不到尾. The company also the same thing. So again, they have a partnership conflict, family conflict. It starts with conflict. The war between country to country. It is the good thing to minimize or not to create conflicts. Maintain harmony and peace".

## N. POWER STRUGGLE IS BECAUSE OF CONFLICT

"Power struggle is because of conflict. Yesterday, T.X.X., he is going to be the Chairman of the SCCC. Some one asked me: Why don't you be the chairman? Let young men dominate. C.X.X. is nominated. I am doing the job. I don't mind. I can be worth behind the scene".

## O. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

"If there is conflict, first you must analyze, just like the roots or the cause. Like the Chinese saying, you have to untie the lock 解铃还需系铃人 (Jie

Ling Hai Xu Ji Ling Ren). You are the man who tie the ring, you should be the man to untie the ring. So you are supposed to untie the ring yourself. So (Jie Ling Hai Xu Ji Ling Ren), you have to know who is the fellow who tie the bell".

#### OUR ORGANIZATION IS EXPANDING TO DO BUSINESS WITH CHINA

##### A. WE ARE SELLING THE IDEA OF 三防 (SANG FANG) TO CHINA

"We are selling the idea of 三防 (Sang Fang) to China. To us, we have been doing that for the past twenty years, But to them is new. They heard about it but before they are not so aware. Now they really are aware. Because this will preserve the timber resource. Secondly they expand the life span of the wood. They use this will guarantee for fifty years or more. So in China, the government, the ministers, they wanted to see me. So I come back to discuss with my engineer. We finalized the agreement and memorandum. Now they have to set up the point. So we started with the Southern part of the China, then we go to all China".

##### B. WE HELP THEM TO SET UP, TO IMPROVE, TO TRAIN, TO TEACH

"We started a demonstration plant. We help them to set up, to improve, to train the people, to teach them the technology. Set up the point. We set up two or three first as a show piece. The other provinces will be benefited. I will be more than a consultant, we offer technical assistance too. We have technique field to upgrade. We don't build a new factory for them. Their factory is big enough. What they need is to modernize it, the production flow, management control. That's why they send the people here. They asked me how many workers we have here. I said all together including staff is less than forty. They said for them even with the cleaner is more than fifty. I think in Singapore, they cannot survive. You have to go for mechanization".

##### C. I AM SELLING THE CONCEPT AND SERVICE INSTEAD OF TIMBER

"But you can't tell people that you come to sell timber. You are a salesman. They are very cautious. For me is to tell my experience. Mine is selling the service. We help you to congregate their factory. This is a presentation to negate, compare to 'I sell you timber'. 'I can sell you very cheap'. You should say 'I help you to set up this thing'. Then, when got timber to trade, I sell you timber. You see you have to know the 'round the corner'. So they are very keen. What I sell is the concept. What we tell them is right for their use".

#### D. I REPRESENT MY COMPANY, BUT SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

"I represent my company. Of course supported by the government".

#### E. SINGAPORE IS LOOKING EVERYTHING INTO CHINA

"Singapore now is looking everything into China. The market is potential. My idea is that it is fully supported by the government because we are selling the services. The ultimate goal is that Singapore is trying to penetrate the market".

#### F. USE THE SINGAPORE COMPANY TO PENETRATE THE CHINA MARKET

"Singapore as the window, the expert to China. Our Singapore is very foresighted. Many people want to use Singapore companies to penetrate the China market. There are certain Canadians doing the same way. Before they went through Hong Kong. Now Hong Kong has a lot of corruption. They are looking Singapore as the window, as the expert to China. Otherwise they have no way to go China. So they partner with Singapore company, or Singapore joined company. It has proven to be successful now. In China, they don't look for other. They trust Singapore company. Every time I go there and talk".

#### G. IT IS A PARTNER - ALI-BA-BA BUSINESS

"We are not the middleman. It is a partner. That is why I bring consultant engineer. He is from England. Last year before I went to China I went to London first. Talked with the group. They are very happy. They spent the last five years. They have no chance to step

in the Chinese market because they say 'I sell you equipment, 'I sell you timber'. They found no way in the past five years. Now with this negotiation, the door is opened. It is a kind of Ali-BaBa type. We have formed a company. Singapore company. We share with the British. We formed this company".

H. INVITATION MUST COME FROM PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE SAME STATUS. YOU MUST TALK TO THE RIGHT AUTHORITY

"At the beginning, the mayor sent the invitation. But the Singapore-China representative office said no. They felt that he was not in the position to invite us. What status people come from will meet people from the same status. Invitation must minimum come from the governor, or the state Because we are going to talk about the investment, long-term project. You must talk to the right authority".

I. THEY WANT TO SEE YOUR POSITION

"Because there are many routine, many regular customers. I am still in charge of the foreign buyers, because it is better for me to show up. As for China and Hong Kong, he wants to see your position, I must go myself. If you are chairman, he finds a chairman to talk with you. If you are a manager, he will find any production manager to talk with you, that is why there is this problem".

J. WE HAVE A BETTER ADVANTAGE BECAUSE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA .... NOW THEY ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO SINGAPORE

"We have a better advantage because our relationship with China and it is easy to go to China. So we may have to take advantage of this period to build up, rather than wait till other people doing, you have less advantage. Now they are looking forward to Singapore".

K. THE CONFIDENCE, THE EXPERIENCE, THE CONCEPT

"It is the confidence, the experience, the concept. If you are doing business with China, you need to have a accumulated experience with China".

L. NO LANGUAGE PROBLEM NO TRADITION BARRIER

"We have no language problem, no tradition barrier. Like a lot of behaviors or traditions. You have to respect each. So we know what to do, what to say when we are in China. I speak in Mandarin. The minister prepare the interpreter, but no use because all these terminology, they don't know".

#### M. WE ARE NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE

"Sometimes it is also the concept. We are not taking advantage, we are putting money in, not only to take out the money. You cannot just tell the concept. Like the American, after the engineer left from Portland, U.S.A., the production in the factory dropped forty percent because they get confused. Now they are trying to bring back some engineer from the U.S.A. I know the American don't teach them everything. The Chinese were very upset and irritated. Feel cheated".

#### N. THE CONFIDENCE AND TRUST FROM BOTH SIDES. IT IS LONG-TERM

"It is the confidence from both sides. They need the trust from both sides. Now the Chinese feel very cheated. The history for few hundred years. They have been cheated by the Russian, the Japanese. Later on, British, American now again the Japanese. They have to be very careful. Now instead of bring in very attractive Hi-tech, but if it is not suitable for the Chinese environment, it is still useless. We teach them to set up the treatment plant and pilot plant and later on the last stage, we join you to produce the chemical in China. So they feel that it is long-term. We supply everything to you but later on we help you to build".

#### O. WE ARE SINCERE AND CLEAN, WE TRY TO TRANSFER

"That means we try to transfer. How they can accept our method is another matter. All these things we are doing we are very sincere and clean".

#### P. RIGHT TO THE CORNER, TO THE BACK DOOR

"You have to know the 'right to the corner' approach, go to the back door. Instead from the front door, you go to the back door. The British company just go direct knock the door. That is why it was very difficult for them".



Q. YOU HAVE TO USE YOUR JUDGEMENT AND YOUR EXPERIENCE  
TO MAKE YOUR DECISION

"Business has to be flexible. It cannot be adopted in one ruling. You have to use your judgement and your experience to make your decision. Failure come from bad judgement. Judgement improved by experience. How you make you judgement is from your experiecne, right? But experience must come from failure".

OUR COMPANY IS.....

A. OUR COMPANY, WE CONSIDER THE PROSPERITY OF SINGAPORE

"Because Singapore is a place we are born, raise, live, stay and die. Our company, we consider the prosperity of Singapore, we have this ultimate aim in our organization. In the association, that is why in the association's meetings, I speak up."

B. SINGAPORE IS A SMALL COUNTRY BUT PROGRESS VERY FAST

"In Singapore, it is very inadequate. To continue doing business is not easy. This is because this small country is progressing very fast, but encounter many obstacles, like a small tree, to grow very fast, you must ruch, squeeze, many storms, economy storm, political storm, it is not very easy. This is related to concept, because S'pore doesn't have its own theory, doctrine, doesn't have a main point, or balance, or stablizer. .

C. EEPERIENCE HAS A STABLIZE EFFECT

"Experience has a stablize effect, stablizing. Like some medium size company, it is fine to do business, if we have one or two experienced pioneers inside, he can offer alot. I am afraid we can't find them. Cannot give rein to one's ability, because he didn't have a new generation, but he can at least provide alternatives".

D. THE COMPANY IS TOO SMALL, WE JOIN THE ASSOCIAION .

"In Singapore the main associations are the Singapore Chinese Chambers of Commerce, S'pore Manufacturer's Association, these are the place where we can influecne the policy. Why do we want to modify



the manufacturing industry policy in the recent years? It was suggested by me. Because in the past thirty years rules and regulation has been past down from the Colonial time. I see no reason and unnecessary. Our general concept is that the Manufacturer Association in the future will be a vibration of the industry. This is our ultimate goal".

#### E. WE CAN FIGHT FOR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

"Because the company is too small, we join the association, foreign trade association. Like the manufacturing association, we can fight for the government support concerning the lengthening of the property lease, give us either commission or automatic renewal".

AS A MANAGER, I AM.....

#### A. ARM-CHAIR EXECUTIVE

"As a Managing Director, you are an armchair executive, you must be an armchair executive. You must do planning strategy, or involve in government, association.....".

#### B. CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP

"You are the captain of the ship. If you captain do the sailor's work, if they do well, you cultivate them, let them try themselves, this is our principle".

#### C. IT IS LIKE A FAMILY. YOU ARE THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

"It is like a family, you are the head of the household. You have many sons and daughter-in-laws. You let them control. They have fights and querrels. You can't keep saying, 'why don't you study? Why you keep loosing money in business? Why you spent so much money?' This is too much".

#### D. I AM A STRONG NEGOTIATOR

"They said I am a strong negotiator. They have to give way. When I start talking, I talk non-stop.....  
'Cantonese sayings: 口水多过茶 (Kou Shui Duo Gao Cha),  
'the saliver is more than the tea'. If I am quiet in

the meeting, they will feel funny. They said I must talk".

#### E. I JOIN IN DIFFERENT ASSOCIATIONS. I WEAR TWO HATS SIMULTANEOUSLY

"The main part of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce is accomodities. The Manufacturer's Association is manufacturing activities and servicing. They are complementary. Both sides have meetings, sometimes, I wear two hats simultaneously. It is like two cars, a big car and a small car, both to me is convenient, I like to use small car for long distance drive, as using big car is inconvenient. My purpose is not in the form of reward, but reward in the honour, this can reach an honour, a status. Don't need to earn money from there".

#### F. THE CHINESE ASPIRATION - BE THANKFUL AND RETURN WHAT YOU GAIN FROM OTHERS BUT GIVE AND NOT ASK FOR RETURN

"I started in 1968/69, at that time, I was on the Colombo fellowship. I went to Australia, 1969, received the scholarship. I had received so many scholarship. At the begining you just voiced opinion. Then after seventeen, eighteen years, you felt that what you have learned, what you have heard and seen can be used, at least part of them. Then it is also a mission. Like when you teach, it also worths it. Of couse you try your best to use what you have learned. If you don't want to teach, you must contribut what you have learned. The aim is to achieve a status, you must have a mission. Human being cannot have no high aspirations, this is one kind of the Chinese aspiration. The government sent you to Australia and Japan, when you return, you felt indepted. We Chinese people are very thankful and want to return to what we gain from others, 受人恩與中華報 (Shou Ren En Dian Chian Nien Bao); but we also 知恩望報 Shi En Muo Bao), only give but not ask for return".

#### METAPHORS OF ORGANIZATION

##### A. COMPANY IS OUR SECOND LIFE

"They are all employees, in the past I am the smallest, just a few hundred dollars, later our first and second generations, They aren't interested, we make a profit evey year. I kept buying in. We have faith in

the company, company is our second life. Of course you won't want to see it collapses. You can only do your best. Management, we didn't talk about any special arrangement, only use the past twenty years experience in the society, or in the main associations. To teach the main concepts to others. It is best to have young people come out, we will be behind the scene. We can give idea behind scene".

#### B. YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR BABY TO BECOME AN ADULT

"You have spending your lifetime here. It is a very much concern. You have the feelings, the belongings of the company. Of course you want to see your baby to become an adult. Then married and have children. And then have their branches. It is the same thing".

#### CONCLUSIONS

##### A. EVERYTHING HAS A THEORY. EITHER YOU SEE IT OR DON'T SEE IT

"Everything has a theory, the meaning of this theory is you have to learn, you must ask, then you add up is equal to knowledge. Chinese people refers to human philosophy. It is very mysterious. You must learn and you must ask. This is a mind of learner, and it can be transfer into theory. They said that timber is a knowledge. I said anything can be a knowledge. Either you see or don't see. Every little thing is a knowledge. You don't say that it has no future, that this is a low-tech., then you don't have faith to carry on, then you can't go on any more".

##### B. WE STILL DON'T HAVE OUR OWN THEORY. IT NEEDS TIME TO CULTIVATE

"Singapore is an independent country, we have a root. But because S'pore is only independent for 25 years, unlike Japan, has already had its own theory. Our country, we still don't have our own theory. It needs time to cultivate. Now in economy recession, in a way it is good for Singapore, tempering oneself through this period, these people, in the future may become a type of Singaporean management theory. A kind of inspiration, this is a more optimistic way of looking".

## STORY 6 : C (Young age group)

### INTRODUCTION

"I am the Managing Director of this company, and I am involved in other related companies too. I am Chinese educated. I have a strong sense of family. I think what I am doing has a lot to do with my personal value. I participate in various cultural activities to balance my material and spiritual life. In our short life span, I hope I can contribute whatever I can to the society. When I close my eyes one day, I will not feel sorry for myself, and will not regret my life journey. We actually work longer hours in the organization than we spend time at home. Therefore to create a family atmosphere and relationship and to enjoy life is very important. It will enhance a sense of belongingness. My involvement with cultural activities is the same reason. I don't know why but I feel that some kind of source is supporting me".

### TRADITIONAL CHINESE MANAGEMENT AND WESTERN MANAGEMENT.....

#### A. CHINESE MANAGEMENT IS MORE HUMAN CENTERED

"Traditional concept of Chinese management is different from Modern management. Chinese management is more Human centered. Everything is done personally. You trust yourself more than you trust anybody else. In terms of management skills and technology, we accumulate them through experience but not through knowledge from books.

#### B. CHINESE DO NOT LIKE TO PLAN TOO FAR AHEAD

"Chinese do not like to plan too far ahead and do not usually have a comprehensive plan. We always live day by day. It may not be workable in our modern society".

#### C. LUCK AND OPPORTUNITY

"Chinese also like to pass their organization or business to their sons. Therefore, for the last generation, the success of business is due to luck and

opportunity. When they pass it to the son, it depends on two factors: whether he has the luck and whether he has the capability".

#### D. IT IS CONTEXTUAL AND SHOULD NOT BE FIXED BY RULES

"When you make any decision in all kinds of situations, the people, what problems they have, the environmental factors and all rounded views have to be taken into considerations. It is contextual and should not be fixed by rules. For Chinese, it is primarily based on human relations. However, this concept has been now been loosely interpreted".

#### E. CHINESE EMPHASIZE ON THE DEPTH OF A RELATIONSHIP

"In terms of trust, Chinese emphasize on the depth of a relationship. Contract is not needed at all. For example, if I had agreed this morning on a business transaction; and should the price drop in the afternoon and I know I am going to lose money, I will still have to keep my promise. That is the verbal agreement and is a very important one too. I stress a lot on human relations".

#### F. CONCERN ABOUT PERSONAL AND FAMILY PROBLEM

"Take for example, the issue on salary. Besides individual performance, the length of service, the organization and individual needs will need to be taken into account. There are other different incentives for the staff. The company will show its concern to staff, such as the 'red and white occasions'. In principle, the company is concerned about the personal problems and concerns of the employees, including their family problems. However, it is flexible depending on the situation and context. I hope that each one will have his/her own satisfaction at work. I feel that the development of the organization should base on the real 'give and take'".

#### G. PAY ATTENTION TO THE DELEGATION OF TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITY

"Generally, I give a lot of autonomy to the staff. However I pay attention to the delegation of tasks and responsibility so that they are mutually connected and controlled. They will come to me when they have



problems, including work and personal problems. Nevertheless, I take charge of the finance in the company".

#### H. BECAUSE IT IS SMALL, IT REMAINS THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC IN THE CLOSE HUMAN RELATIONS

"The reason is that this is a small-medium size company. Because it is small, it remains the unique characteristic of close human relations. Many times, when I go to the bank to ask for bank loan, it is because of who I am. It is easier for me to do it than any of my staff because of my personal relationship with the bank. It is the liability that I have. And therefore I am taking charge of the finance".

#### I. WHEN I DELEGATE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY. I DECIDE WHAT WORK AND WHAT PEOPLE I HAVE

"When I delegate role and responsibility, generally, I look at certain factors: the nature of task, and individual capability and personality. What I decide is based upon what work and what kinds of people I have, and match them so that people will have ways to maximize their potential".

#### J. POWER STRUGGLE IS THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN NATURE. HUMAN-CENTEREDNESS CONTRIBUTES TO THE POWER STRUGGLE

"Regarding this, there are two aspects of power struggle. One is among the shareholders; the other is in the managerial relationship with employees. There are these kind of problems. Generally every management has its own problems. The power struggle, is the problem of human nature. Human nature and weakness. Even in the Western management, they exist too. In the Eastern management, the phenomena may be a little bit more obvious. It is more obvious because of several reasons":

##### 1. People are related

"One is the interpersonal relationships in the organization. That is people are often related. It is not unusual to find brothers and sisters or children working in the company".

##### 2. Weakness in management



"The other reason is in the weakness of organizational management. In organizational management, our management system and promotion system is not as obvious and clearcut as those of the western company. They have a very good salary scale. Such salary scale has a yearly increment, and has a very good assessment. However in Chinese management organization, generally it is based on the boss's observation of the employees. Such direct assessment is not a very comprehensive assessment".

### 3. Human relation is emphasized

"However, it is because of the Chinese society. It is not only limited in the Chinese organization. Chinese society generally is a human centered society. Human being as the center in any interaction. It does not happen only in organization. In society or in any social gathering, such aspect is very much emphasized. Therefore there is a saying that in business, you have to rely very much on human relations. Human relations is very helpful in our business. However, such factors indirectly contribute to the power struggle in organization".

## POWER STRUGGLE AND CONFLICT

### A. POWER STRUGGLE AMONG THE SHAREHOLDERS

"Concerning shareholders, sometimes if everybody in the organization is cooperative, shareholders, in organizing the organization, will hope that the company will make a profit. When it makes a profit, sometimes the benefits have to be shared among the employees. Therefore if there are many shareholders, and if a person is in control or power, he will not only get the reputation, but will also gain a higher reputation, thus making his status outstanding in the organization. Indirectly he will enhance his reputation and status in the society. When the social status and reputation are enhanced, it will bring him some intangible benefits. From another aspect, if he is in control of the organization, this power controller will have more and better benefits. For example, he will have more bonus, although dividends is paid the same to everybody. It is mainly in bonus. In Chinese organization, bonus is dependent

on the profits. If the company performs well, the person in control will have a relatively good reward".

## B. POWER STRUGGLE AMONG THE EMPLOYEES

### 1. EVERYBODY WANTS TO GET APPRECIATION

"Among the shareholders and employees, this is also the human nature. Everyone of us in our work boundary, social boundary, or society or company, everything we do we always hope that someone will appreciate; just as in children-parent, student-teacher relationships. When you get to the society, it is the employee and boss relationship. Everything you do, you hope that other people will appreciate. In such an effort to gain appreciation, some will hope to get self-satisfaction, while others will hope to have material reward. It happens to everybody. Everybody wants to get appreciation. Once you have this need, it may create conflicts, disagreement with other people. It is a matter of degrees".

### 2. CONFLICTS DUE TO SITUATION OR CONFLICTS DUE TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

"If it is the situation that causes the conflict, although obvious, it may not be as serious nor will it have serious consequences. But if it is between two persons in a relationship, then the relationship has obvious conflict. This is more serious. If it is the issue that has obvious conflict, that can be resolved. But until now, there isn't any conflict in relationships. However, all these things are inevitable".

## C. IF THERE ISN'T CONFLICT, THERE IS NO NEED FOR MANAGEMENT

"As a leader of the company, when I am doing work in all aspects of management, whether it is business management, sales management, or finance management, administrative, including personnel management are all included. If there isn't anything like that, then there is no need for management. Management basically includes all these".

## D. THE WAY I DEAL WITH CONFLICT

"Generally, in actual action, I will first ask them to face to face talk to me. Help me to understand the two parties' view points. Listen what the two parties have to say and understand them. Then I can make sure that any decisions made will not be biased. That will not resolve the problem. In consideration, find ways to allow the nature of the problem, reveal its black and white, right and wrong, use that as one of the important elements in the consideration. But after having considered all these aspects, it is also inevitable, among Chinese, to think about senior-Junior relation. That is, the one in higher position should be more accepting and forgiving in attitudes when dealing with the one who is below. The one who is below the higher rank should, after things had happened, consider his senior, who is in higher position".

#### E. IN MY ORGANIZATION, THERE IS NO POWER STRUGGLE AMONG SHAREHOLDERS BECAUSE THERE ARE NO OUTSIDERS

"In my organization, there is no power struggle among the shareholders because there is no outsider. It is all family business. And in family business, it is all brothers and sisters. Among brothers and sisters, we have not much problems. There are some reasons:

##### 1. WE GET ALONG WELL. WE ARE ALL CHINESE EDUCATED

"One is that my brothers and sisters get along well together. We are all Chinese educated. Eversince we were young, we were brought up in the inculcation of oriental tradition".

##### 2. WE HAVE THE CONCEPT OF THE ORDER OF OLD AND YOUNG

"As a result, we have the concept of the order of old and young. Generally, younger brothers and sisters have to respect the older brothers and sisters. There are a lot of advantages in this respect".

##### 3. WE HAVE A FEW ORGANIZATIONS, ALL OF US HAVE SHARES IN EACH ORGANIZATION

"On the other hand, we have a few organizations, although our shares are all shared. All of us have shares in each organizations. However each person has more responsibility in one or the other organization in terms of management. Everyone of us is so busy that we

only hope someone from among us can take over instead of all fighting for more power and control".

#### 4. IN THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE ORGANIZATION, THERE ARE SOME GENERATION GAPS

"In the traditional Chinese organization, there are some generation gaps. From the older generation's perspective, we can understand their thinking. Because in different generation, with different education, different life experience, we have generation gap problem. When the older generation bequeaths to the younger generation, even among brothers, sometimes there are problems. In addition, with the new technology and the problem with understanding the English language, the old generation often feel that they have no where to stand. Modernization, mechanization, computerization, strongly impact on the parental authority. They lost their power in the organization, and reduce their status in the family. For example some of my friends would prefer to go to Hong Kong and Taiwan; at least they don't have any problem with the language. The emotional communication becomes the obstacle of the two generations. The other problem is their different ways of doing things. The older generation experienced the World War II disaster. They simply want to enjoy their peaceful old age. They don't want to see what they had accomplished with all their heart and blood gone like a river. They just want to maintain the present situation. They feel satisfied. But the new generation want to perform, want to accomplish something, want to break through, and are very eager. This is not well accepted by the older generation. It is also one of the factors in the generation gap. You can also ask them what is their view of the past, present and future. Nowadays, there are more and more English educated people. It will to a certain extent affect the development of the traditional Chinese company. The first generation is those who grew up having gone through the disastrous war years. The second generation (i.e., our generation) can maintain our ancient heritage. The third generation are the English educated generation. They have very weak traditional concept. The fourth generation will be out of touch with the tradition altogether. The evolution of the society will bring up many problems. You can also ask them their views on the power struggle



issue. Power struggle is a characteristic of the Chinese organization".

AS A MANAGER, I AM.....

#### A. MY WORK INVOLVES TWO ASPECTS

"My work involves three aspects: one is the associations, the other one is social cultural organizations, and the third one is the Hui Kuan. They have mutual influence on each other. Firstly, I will get to know more people through social and cultural activities. Through that channel, I get a lot of new information. Secondly, it will help to build up my status, confidence and trust with the outsider and my staffs. Thirdly, it is a reassurance of my personal and spiritual well being. I can say that what I do is based on my interest and values. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce belongs to the commercial activities. Hui Kuan belongs to social activities. Being involved in social activities will help me to gain respect from the outside, and will have positive effect in my business activities. Moreover, social involvement can train up my working ability, reinforce my confidence in dealing with business, and improve my organization ability".

#### B. METAPHOR - I AM THE SOUL OF THE ORGANIZATION

"I will say I am the soul of the organization. It has its pros and cons. The pros is that I am at the central to motivate the organization. The cons is that if I collapse, the organization will have a great impact. I see the organization as my second family. I hope that all my staffs see it as their second family too. We have several social occasions to enhance our personal relationships and understanding. I believe that the personal relationships and understanding will help to increase their work effectiveness and satisfaction".

#### C. THERE IS A DIRECT INFLUENCE ON WHAT I DO AND HOW I MANAGE

"I think there is a direct influence on what I do and how I manage. Moreover, it is not a small influence. But as a whole, it is very difficult to differentiate, that is to say this influential power comes from many aspects, yet it is difficult to tell

whether it is your outlook in life, your education, your past experience, or the God you worship. It is very difficult to differentiate. All these combinations make us do what we do. When you encounter some difficulty and frustration, you will stand firm. You will not be that easily knocked down. You will become more self-assured and confident in handling your problems. You will have a different priority in your judgement, and things like that".

#### D. IN MY BUSINESS, I EXPAND IT BASED ON MY OWN IDEOLOGY AND GOAL

"In my business, if I expand it. I do hope to expand it and earn more money. But basically for my own ideology and goal, I hope that I can have a sense of security in living. This sense of security includes my own family and my next generation. And this sense of security should be a little bit higher than the basic living standard. In the other aspect, I hope to reach other social goals. These social goals, of course, include my own belief, ideology and goals, and my own personal interest. If I can earn more and maintain myself..... Because if you want to develop other aspects of your social goals, you need to have the social requirements. These social requirements include not only your economic power, but also your status and social position. To maintain these, you have to maintain a certain level of performance in your personal career. Then you can maintain your basic requirements and quality".

#### MY JOB IS.....

"Every day I come in at around seven-thirty. I am the earliest person come to the office. The first thing is to worship the God. Then I drink tea and read newspaper. I review the documents or letters left on my desk yesterday by the staff after I left. After that, the staff come in to discuss with me some work. Then I start to review my work today, including delegating tasks to the staff. Around nine-thirty, the salesmen will come in to talk to me or to consult me about some problems. Otherwise, I will have make telephone calls to contact people, including bank, local and foreign customers, associations etc. After that I will review the financial situation and some telaxes. Between ten



to twelve, I usually deal with some unfixed jobs such as letter writing or send telax. I usually contact people to find out about the market, chit-chatting. In the morning, I usually stay in the company. Sometimes I go out lunch with customers or guests. Otherwise I will stay in the office. After lunch, the staff will pass me more documents and mail to review. In the afternoon, I go out to visit the related organizations, visit the customers or the associations. If I don't go out, I will check the invoice, sign letters and reports. I review the account monthly. Appointments are usually fixed in the afternoon. I will check with the staff whether there are any important matter that I need to attend to. Around five o'clock, when the sales people come back, I will chit chat with them. If they have important issues, they will consult me".

#### MANAGEMENT IS ....

##### A. MANAGEMENT INCLUDES A SPIRITUAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS

"When you talk about management <sup>管理</sup> (Kuan Li), these two words include a spiritual and practical aspects. When you talk about management system and methods, Chinese management, in the five thousand years has no one systematic management system. It is reliance on people. A good person will acculturate a group of intelligent people. Good people will do something good. Therefore I myself feel that the spirit has to exist. Nevertheless in the management system, it is still necessary to learn from the Western management method. I have told you before of my ambivalence. In the real black and white, the Western style will bring more effects. But the real factors that have to be taken into consideration has to come from the Eastern spirit and consciousness. Therefore, it should be changed. The change is like what I said about the Western management method integrating with our Eastern concept and essence. And such tendency itself is a change. And this change should bring progress. Actually we have also talked about the change of the whole educational system, the change of the language policy, and the change of the political situation. All these changes motivate us to move toward such a direction. Singapore will never again become what she is today based solely on the hard work of the past generation. We now, to a

very large extent, have to look into our future. If that is the case, we cannot afford to lose touch with the world. We speak the same English language, and we have to contact the world in the same channel..... Take for example our business with the Japanese products agent. In the style of doing business, especially in treating the products, we have to reach out to meet expectation, their style. Otherwise, we will be hardly appreciated in business and will be unable to make progress. In the past years, from the results, we have seen that the Western civilization has really helped us in dealing with a lot of things effectively and efficiently. We have also saved a lot of money and time. Therefore, although it is the tendency of the whole situation and environment, such a tendency has in the process, due to the result of our contact and experience, proved to be helpful to us. Then Chinese are people who have a very strong sense of adaptability. In many ways you still present yourself as a Chinese. It is one's ownself, one's own basic stand in roots. Then in other things, we are very good in adapting".

#### B. MY CONCEPT OF 組織 (CHU ZHI), ORGANIZATION, AND 管理 (KUAN LI), MANAGEMENT

"Chu Chi 組織 means division of work, Kuan Li 管理 means maintaining interpersonal harmony to attain the work goal, including interpersonal management, finance management, and public relation".

"You can put it that way. Kuan Li 管理 is dealing with human issues, internal and external. I feel that in your interview, you can ask about the older generation's perspectives and problems".

#### THE INTEGRATION OF EASTERN AND WESTERN

"The integration of Eastern and Western, the biggest problem is that one does not really know what is Eastern and Western. In this situation, to integrate both will create big problems. Within the Eastern, what is good and what is bad has already been very debatable. What we choose for ourselves as good and bad may not be right for us. The wrong choice is very possible to create a very different effect. And even after we make the real choice, the choice may not be workable. The West could bring in both good and bad

things. Presently, the biggest contradiction between the East and the West is that the Eastern people always choose the worst side of the East to criticise. The same is true for the West. Every time we choose the worst part to criticise; for the Chinese the weakness is not being able to be open to learn and understand others. When you have no such intention, you will not be able to understand others. And before we understand other people, we should not make any judgement. All these are fundamental problems. The fundamental problems are already so complicated, then the complicated choice results in the direction we are now moving. Moving in this path, of course you will realize that in the give and take of the two, they are still in many situations contradicting, mutually exclusive. I don't know so-called Eastern and Western. Sometimes, in many situations, the intellectuality and emotion is always mixing and contradicting. In practice, it may still be a relatively big problem".

## CONCLUSION

"We are still searching. For sure, what is Singapore ultimately going to become? Until when is it ultimate? After ten years, twenty years, or a hundred years? Is that what is meant by ultimate? And what is this ultimate? We don't know. But what we do know and are sure of is that we will not be the past conservative Eastern. Even if we really westernize ourselves, it is impossible that we will be totally Americanized. Ultimately, we are or will still become a Chinese Westernization or Singaporean Westernization".

## C H A P T E R V

### INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

Interpretation and Analysis of the information collected is presented in five scenes.

Scene 1 consists of a dialogue among the researcher and the six interviewees' perception and interpretation of Chinese management in Singapore. The purpose of scene One is to present the similarities and differences in their views of the characteristics of Chinese management. A dialogue among the researcher and the interviewees is created to reveal the variations of their views, and also to reflect the role of the researcher and her participation in the process of the social construction.

Scene 2 consists of a contrast between Western management and Chinese management abstracted from the interviews. Most of the interviewees tended to compare and contrast Chinese management with Western management to define "what is not" Chinese way of organizing and managing.

Scene 3 focuses on the dilemmas of integrating Western and Chinese management. Dialogue One shows the

dilemma between the old and young generations, the father and the son who work in the same organization. They hold different perspectives and interpretation of their Chinese organization and management; Dialogue Two is an internal dialogue of the son, who has been exposed to the Western management concepts and attempted to apply them to the Chinese organization. On the one hand, he complained about Chinese management; on the other hand, he still operated based on the Chinese management values. These two dialogues aim to reveal how generation differences affect organization management, and the dilemmas of trying to intergrate Western and traditional Chinese management.

Scene 4 presents four metaphors that were used by the interviewees to describe Chinese organization and management. A meta-metaphor that captures the interconnection of the four metaphors will be proposed and elaborated.

Scene 5 consists of analysis of information on what Chinese managers do based on their description of their everyday managerial activities. Five metaphors expressed by the interviewees will be used to describe what the Chinese managers do in their daily managerial work.



### Scene 1 : Perception Of Chinese Management

Scene 1 attempts to present the common themes and characteristics of Chinese management that were identified by the interviewees. A dialogue among the researcher and interviewees is created here to articulate what they perceived as Chinese management. The descriptions of the interviewees in the dialogue are quoted from the original transcripts with some paraphrasing done by the researcher.

#### Dialogue

I (Interviewer) : Based on your experience, what do you perceive as Chinese management?

T.EB: Chinese management emphasizes human relations. Modern management does not emphasize that. Chinese management gives chance to people if he makes mistake.

C: Chinese management is more human-centered. It emphasizes the depth of the relationship.

T.S.: It is the long-term relationships that count. The workers feel that they are part of the family. They feel obligated. Everybody works for their obligation. It is family concern. Our organization is 100% Chinese type of management style. What we emphasize is obligation. Family relationships play a lot. Whether a person is good, whether one's performance is better than the others is not the question. Everything is relationship. Everything is in a micro level. It just stays in family concern. There is a power core. The key personnel are all the family members, or belong to the bosses themselves.

T.F.: We emphasize emotion 感情 (Kan Chin), emphasize human emotion 人情 (Ren Chin). In terms of the employer-employee relation, we always make it feel like a family.

T.EB: For example, a person who works with me till he is old, I will allow him to continue till he can't work anymore, and give him an amount of money for retirement. It is a matter of emotion 人情 (Ren Chin). We never sack people or retrench people.



T.F: I think we have to take care of the old workers and some relatives. We will give more priority. We will try to do our best to let them stay till they can't work. We will also try our best to arrange their work. Try very best not to change their work, unless there is a very good method and opportunity to do it. Don't ever hurt their hearts.

T.S.: Most of the staff have been working with us for a long time. They feel that they are in one family which I think is a good thing. But it also creates many problems. For example, we have a salesperson, he has a poor performance. But we can't do anything. We have another person who can't even issue an invoice properly, but he has been here for many years. It is never our policy and philosophy to retrench people.

T.F.: We have many difficulties with the old workers. The most terrifying thing is our own people. If he is not our own people, it is much easier to deal with.

I: So what do you do with your own people, when emotion (Ren Chin) is conflicting with work?

T.EB: It depends on the situation. For example, if my son does something wrong, my brother scolds him. I will tell my son that his uncle is right. This is 幫理不幫親 (Bang Li Bu Bang Chin). I stand for the reason but not the emotion, although he is my son. But if a worker who has been with us for a long time, we should forgive him more. We cannot 100 % follow our own principle. Then it is a matter of emotion. Logic or emotion, it depends on the situation.

T.F: The most important thing is not to hurt their feelings. It is very difficult but we have to do it slowly. We have to find a way to help them.

I: Between emotion and reason, how do you make a decision?

T.EB.: It all depends on the situation. For example, emotion is emotion, contract is contract. Contract still needs to be carried out even if we consider emotion 人情 (Ren Chin). Too much of emotion (Ren Chin) is not good.

H: Not really. In my organization, we do it differently. There is no contract. We can do business on the phone. Once you make a commitment, even if the contract has not been signed, you have to keep your words. It is very risky sometimes. But it is the uniqueness of our field.

C: I agree. Chinese emphasize on the depth of a relationship. Contract is not needed at all. When you commit a business on the phone in the morning, even if the price drops in the afternoon, and you know that you are going to lose money, you still have to keep your promise. It is a matter of trust.

T.EB: Yes. I agree that trust is very important. But in terms of contract, those who are more modernized, I think they have contracts most of the time. A lot of companies still don't operate that way. But the way I work, I have to have contract. At least he has to write in black and white. The way I work is 先小人, 后君子 (Xian Xiao Ren, Hou Jun Zi). We should talk till we are both satisfied, so that we don't gossip after. This is different from trust. I agree that trust is very important. It is the foundation, the capital. You have to build trust from the beginning. If you have the capability but your foundation is not good, it equals to nothing.

I: What do you mean by trust?

T.EB.: Trust means when you are in business, you keep to your promise, keep your account very clear. When you promise to return the money, you must return.

T.YB.: Trust means you have to gain trust from other people. It is different from you trusting people. That means if you owe people, you must pay back. So that we gain confidence and trust from other people. It is very important. But when you trust people, you need to use your judgement. It depends on how you work.

H: I agree. I am doing business with China. The confidence and trust from both sides are very important. They now trust Singapore companies because we are sincere and clean. You have to use your experience to make your judgement. Failure comes from bad judgement. Judgement is improved by experience.

I: How do you make the judgement?

T.YB.: There are many ways to make your judgement. I don't quite believe in physical appearance. First we have to talk to them and make them talk. Listen to what they talk about. Then we can judge how worthy these people are for us to trust.

H: It is the same in negotiation. You have to listen first. Try not to talk. Because the more you talk, the more you have the gap. It is better if you watch and listen first. Also you must be humble, must be accomodative to people. He may be wiser and better than you. Why not listen to him? Then you can tell from what he says. It is like the Chinese Gong Fu. You cannot expose everything. The Chinese value is to have reservation.

I: We have discussed that Chinese management is very human-centered. It emphasizes on human relationship. So emotion 人情 (Ren Chin) and trust 信用 (Xin Yong) are very important. However there seems to be some paradoxes. In terms of emotion 人情 (Ren Chin), sometimes when it is too much, it could create problems. For example, with the old workers. Even if they are not doing a good job, you still try your best to keep them till they retire. It becomes a problem that you need to find ways to help them to do their job. Because it is usually not your policy to retrench or sack people. In terms of contract, we have some different views here. Some of you said that contract is necessary, some said that you never need contract. But the common principle is that you feel that it is very important to keep your promise. If you commit to a business on the phone, even if the price changes, you still need to carry out the original agreement even without a written contract. Or if you promise to return money, you must return it. It is a matter of trust. But you also differentiate "trust from other people" and "trust to other people". It is important that you gain trust from other people because it is the foundation and capital of your business. But trust to other people, you need to make some judgement. Judgement is from experience. Listening and observation are some tactics in making good judgement and negotiation too. It is like the Chinese Gong Fu. Chinese like to reserve.

T.EB: Chinese are not only reserved, they are very hardworking too. From my point of view, we Chinese are successful in business, it is because we are very hardworking. We do not calculate about the time. We are unlike the Western company in which people work only eight hours. We can work more than that.

T.YB: Oh. I used to work till very late. If people want to buy, you have to sell. You must do it no matter how late. Another factor is that when we first started the business, we have only small capital. Small capital with hardwork. That is why we are successful. Western company has big expense although they earn more. For Chinese we don't earn that much but we spend less too.

T.EB: We started from very small. Before that, I partnered twice with other people. They were not successful. I felt that in doing business, you have to do it with your own people. So I asked my brother to partner with me. We started with very little capital.

T.YB: We had only five people that time, my brother, myself, a clerk and two general workers. Five of us started in a very small shop at a side street.

H: My organization is actually combined by two small companies. One was from my father who partnered with other people. My father had only small share. Another one was my uncle. When my father died, I was only 14 years old. My uncle took care of me. I told my uncle that we should combine. If we did not combine, it was very difficult to survive because both were very small. So we finally joined to become one company. I originally had little power because I was the smallest shareholder. Then my uncle died and some other founders died. Left one old man and I. He was doing much better but now he is very old, about 90 years old. He asked me to take over. Our company is still very small now. It is only about fifty people. But with small size, you don't lose control.

C: I actually started my company. When I first started, my father had half the shares, I had half the shares. Later I got support from my former boss. Gradually, the company is more developed. Then my two brothers came out to help me to start another company. We now have a few companies.

T.F: We started from very small too. My brother and I plus two friends, four of us started together. Because our company is a small size company, we the bosses and the other workers do all the big and little things together. The bosses have no privilege with the workers. We the bossess would not order them to do everything. If the work is very difficult, we would not ask them to do.

I: It seems that Chinese organizations are usually started with small size and hard work, and then maintained as small or medium size too. Yes?

H: When a company grows big, they have to diversify. Then it has to keep on growing because of high borrowing bank loan from bank or financial institution. They have no other way. In Chinese saying, 头大釣不到尾 (Toh Ta Dao Bu Dao Wei). You cannot look after your tail because your head is too big. It is a very good Chinese quote.

T.YB.: If you talk about business and management, you have to think about the size. If your organization is small and medium size, I still think that it is better to do it in Chinese way. If you grow too big, you lose control. It is very hard to know each other. I worked in a big European company for about eight to nine years before. I didn't even know who the Chairman was. I never met him. In Chinese management, the boss and the staff are closer. You know who is the managing director or chairman. So I think the gap between the top management and lower workers in big company is very wide. If you want to complain something, you have to go through many levels. In Chinese management, if you are not happy, you can talk to us. If someone complains, we do the observation ourselves. Moreover, in the decision making, the Chinese way of management, the boss can more or less decide. They can see faster and have quicker change because we don't have to involve so many levels of people. In the European management, you have to wait, by the time you reach the top, make a decision, pass it down, it takes very long time. A lot of people have to sit on it. I think Chinese way is better and faster. It depends on how big is the organization. Like ours, I think my sales staff and I can make direct decision because I am in charge of sales.



T.S.: In that sense the decision making become very ad-hoc basis. It is very changeable, like the weather. It all depends on the boss. When he is happy, he says yes. When he is not happy, he says no. There is no principle to follow. Even if there is, it is not clear. Everything is ad-hoc basis. The very classical Chinese do things according to the instincts. They don't support it with facts. Now we are growing bigger, it is hard to control. So you need some kind of mechanism to help you to make decision. If I tell my boss cost-benefit analysis, they will not understand. They will tell me that their experience tell them this is the right way.

T.EB.: I don't think when I say yes, it is yes; when I say no, it is no. It depends on the situation. We cannot totally follow our own principle to deal with people.

C: In my view, when you make any decision in all kinds of situations, you take people, what problems they have, environmental factors and all rounded views into consideration. It is contextual and should not be fixed by rules.....Again it is primarily based on human relations. However I think this concept gets loose now.

I: What factors do you take into consideration?

C: For example, when I delegate role and responsibility, generally I look at certain factors: the nature of the task, and individual capability and personality. I decide based upon what work and what people I have, and match them so that people will have ways to maximize their potential.

T.F: I think it is important to conform to the majority. Among the shareholders, when we have any problems, we have to discuss before we do it. It is the same with the young generation. Everybody doesn't necessarily have the same view, especially our young generation. But we can still find a way to finally come up with a conclusion which is more acceptable by the majority people. If that is the majority view, we will follow the majority view to implement it.

T.EB: For me, sometimes I like to do it this way. I have something to do. I have made the decision in my heart. I will discuss with those senior staff, ask them



for their opinions. They may have the similar opinion. If they have different opinion, I have to see. I will not impose my way. It depends on the situation.

T.YB: It depends on what kind of decision too. For example, I am in charge of sales, I think I can make the decision straight away. But for finance I have to consult my brother and think about what to do, what steps to take.

H: We still do not have collective decision, because it is still a private company. We have some kind of implicit norms that we follow some kind of logic. Everyone follow a work pattern, everyone can cooperate together. You don't do things beyond your power. It is like in a family, you are the head of the household. You have many sons and daughters and in-laws. You let them control in their boundary, don't interfere too much.

I: It seems that we have different ways in decision making: decision by instinct, by factual analysis, conforming to the majority, situational analysis, individual decision with consultation of staff or following the implicit norm. However, the common point among all of these ways is that people who are involved in the decision making process are either the boss, between bosses or among bosses and successors. There is little involvement of others.

T.S: Yes. There is always a power core in Chinese organizations. It is right in the center. Very limited amount of people. All key personnel are all family members. In my organization the Managing Director is the power core.

I: So the organization size is small and the power core consists of small number of people, usually the bosses and the family members?

T.S: Yes. And they believe that if you are at the top, you need to touch on everything. You have to know everything. You have to involve in all departments. I believe that if you are a manager, you don't interfere in the subordinate's work. You don't care how they do it, what you want is the result.

T.EB.: If your organization is small, and you don't know everything, you will have a headache. In Cantonese saying: 一脚踢 "You kick it all in one leg". Our old style is to be involved in everything. We know everything from the top to the bottom. We need to know little bit of everything. I will listen to everybody. I want to know how they do it. If they have any problems, they approach me.

T.F: When the company is small, manager means you do everything. You don't differentiate tasks. We have to manage everything. You have to understand everything. If you don't know, don't understand, when your subordinates have any problems to ask you for help, how are you going to help? We have to let them know that we are concerned about their work.

H: We are a small company. A lot of things still need to be done myself. 親力親為 (Chin Li Chin Way). Because we are export oriented, we need to contact the foreign countries. I am still in charge of the foreign buyers, it is better for me to show up. For example with China, they want to see your position. I must go myself and talk to the right authority.

T.YB.: Chinese are successful because we do business personally. We are involved in everything. So that we can make judgement ourselves.

C: In Chinese management, everything you do is done personally. You trust yourself more than anybody else.

T.S: It becomes that there is no ranking. In our organization, we know only the bosses. Other than that all levels are equal. So there is no organizational chart, no clear organizational objectives, no proper planning. Ever since we started the organization, there is no clear cut function, because they have a concept of Chin-Chay, don't be too calculative. I do a little bit, you do a little bit. There is no clear cut responsibility and accountability. There is no organizational chart, no regular meeting. No agenda given, no time given. Everything is ad-hoc basis.

T.YB: We do not have any organizational chart either, but we know who should do what. We do not have any long-term planning. But I don't think we do not plan.

We plan in our head because most of the people in Chinese organization are not highly educated. They can plan in their head but not on paper. They don't look too far. Maybe they can plan it only for this month, next month or five months from now. Western company has long term planning. They predict two years or five years. But will the prediction come through? We don't know. They got planning, but I don't think they can challenge the Chinese way of business.

C: Chinese do not like to plan too far ahead and do not usually have a comprehensive plan. We always live day by day. It may not be workable in the modern society.

T.EB.: We do not meet regularly. Anytime, when we have anything, we can discuss.

T.YB.: We interact everyday. We see each other everyday. I can go to my staff and ask them anything. I don't have to go through another person and wait.

T.F.: Because we see each other everyday. We can discuss anytime. Any problems or issue, we can discuss it right away. We do not have a fixed meeting among the shareholders. But we do have a general meeting with the workers. Now we do it with each department. It saves time.

I: It seems to me that there are several factors that make up the characteristics of Chinese management. Size seems to be critical. Small size company allows more sense of control and closer personal relationship. The boss and the workers are closer. You see each other and interact with each other everyday. The top manager is usually involved in everything so that you have a sense of control, you can help your subordinate in doing their work, and you know the happening in the organization. Even in business, you prefer to do business personally. First of all, you can make your judgement, secondly, you will represent the authority of your organization, and deal with the right authority of other organization. So in Chinese management, the gap between the top management and employee is small. There is no ranking. There is only boss and non-boss. There is no clear cut function, clear responsibility and accountability, neither is there a clear organizational chart. There is no proper long-term planning, although most of you who plan may plan in

your head. There is also no regular meeting because you see each other everyday. You discuss problems and issues in the day-to-day interaction. T.S. has mentioned that there is a power core right in the center of the organization. The decisions are usually made by the people in the power core, the bosses and the key personnel who are usually the family members. Could we discuss more on the power core?

T.S.: As I said earlier on, in all typical Chinese organization, the key personnel are all the family members. In my organization, the Managing Director, my father, is the power core. He has been there for the past thirty years and still remains because nobody dare to take over his job. None of them suited to be in that post too. Now it has become the picture that I am going to replace him in the position. Then I become the power core. I am not able to spread it out. We have no suitable candidates for other key posts. There is no candidate in our family, both myself and my cousin. So we may have to search from outside. I would never want to get anybody from the other shareholder's family because it will become a power core in the future over there. Right now I carry a lot of authority and power. I have a lot of influential power. Why? Is it because I am different from the other two successors or is it because they are willing to comply? I don't know. I am now involved in everything. It will become a even narrow core, a very localized authority in the future.

T.F.: I think I am playing the role of Managing Director, most importantly it is because the company gives me the positional authority. Without this positional authority, I can't represent the company to motivate the departments. With the positional authority, I must maximize it. If I don't maximize, don't manage, the board of directors will be disappointed. Other people will not be convinced. With the directors, we rarely have conflicts because we are very sincere in dealing with the job. We always have the company as the ultimate goal. Moreover we have been partners for many years. We know each other's personality and temperament. With the young generation, I don't know whether there is power struggle in their heart. My speculation is that more or less there is some jealousy and some kind of competition. We have recently selected a General Manager. He is my son. He was selected by the shareholders. They feel that he is



more responsible and flexible, more able to accept things. He has good rapport with the workers. The other two, I don't know how to articulate. I think it is their attitude in life.

T.S.: I feel that I am very different from the other two managers. I went to Chinese school, they went to English school. I can speak Mandarin and Hokkien. They speak English. We think very differently. We have very different attitudes in work. They stay high up and have no sense of belonging. We had heated argument sometimes. I don't confront them. I can control myself very well because I believe that quarrelling will not resolve anything. We hardly talk to each other. They never comply with my instruction. They only boycott me. It is a very big obstacle for me. The way I handle it is I never ask these people to work. I leave them alone. The workers comply with me. They follow my instruction. My problem now is from my level up.

H: Power struggle starts with conflict. There are partnership conflict, family conflict, or gang (sub-group) conflict. There isn't any power conflict in my organization because I am the big shareholder and I am the boss. But in the association, they are now electing a new chairman. The young man dominates. I can still do the work. I don't mind to be behind the scene. It is better not to create conflicts and maintain harmony and peace.

T.EB: We Chinese organizations have power struggle problems; often time it is related to family. Sometimes the family members of both parties like to intervene in and want to dominate more power. My brother and I cooperate well. We have been working together for nearly 20 years. Sometimes we do quarrel, but everything has to have a compromise. We are understanding. I am the elder brother and the big shareholder, he has to respect me and I have to give way sometimes. Everything has to compromise. But the members of the two families, the two wives sometimes interfere. A lot of problems happened that way. Some people just can't think openly. They are very rigid sighted.

C: In my view, there are two aspects of power struggle. One is among the shareholders; the other is in management, the relationship with the employees. Power

struggle is a problem of human nature. The phenomena is more prominent in the Eastern management because of two reasons: one is the interpersonal relationship as many people are related, either family members or relatives. The other reason is the weakness of the management system. There is no proper salary scale or promotion system. Promotion is generally based on the boss observation. Such direct assessment is not a comprehensive assessment. However it is all because Chinese society is a human-centered society. Human being is the center of any interaction in organization, society, or any social gathering. Such aspect is very much emphasized. It is on one hand helpful in the organization, on the other hand it also contributes to the power struggle. In my organization, there is no power struggle among the shareholders because there is no outsider. Our brothers and sisters get along well. We are Chinese educated and grew up in the inculcation of oriental tradition. We have the concept of the order of old and young. It is very helpful.

I: How do you handle power conflict?

C: There are two types of conflict, situational conflict and interpersonal conflict. The latter one is more serious. In actual action, I will first ask them face to face talk to me. I listen to their view points, and make sure that I am not biased in any decision. In the process I will find ways to allow the nature of the problem reveal its black and white, right and wrong. After having considered all the aspects, it is also inevitable for Chinese to think about the senior-junior relation. That is, the one in a higher position should be more accepting and forgiving in attitudes when dealing with the one who is below. The one who is below should consider and respect his senior.

T.YB.: It is important to talk. Just talk it through. My brother and I talk about it. Or sometimes we leave for a few days, don't see each other. But we have to consider the family. Family is the tie.

T.EB.: As I said before, there is a big shareholder and a small shareholder. The big shareholder should allow the small shareholder. The small shareholder should respect the big shareholder. The boss should allow the staff more. They will feel happy. If there is any misunderstanding, the boss should find chance to



explain to them. Of course, the staff should respect the boss too.

H: In any conflict situation, you must analyze the roots or the cause. Just like the Chinese saying, the person who ties the ring should untie the ring. 解鈴還需繫鈴人 (Jie Ling Hai Xu Ji Ling Ren). You are the person who ties the ring. You are the person who is supposed to untie the ring yourself. So we have to know who ties the ring.

I: So power core and power struggle are related. Power core is usually the boss or the bosses. Power struggle starts with conflict. It seems to me that there are a few factors that contribute to the power struggle: 1. whether it is a vertical power struggle or a horizontal power struggle; 2. How many people are in the power core or surround the power core? 3. What is the degree of involvement of the shareholders, successors, and family members? H's situation seems to be a "one man show". He is the power core. There is no active involvement of other shareholders and family members. He is much more involved in the associations. C's situation, although there are several shareholders, they aren't involved in the same organization. Moreover they are all family members and there is no successor involvement. In T.EB and T.YB.'s situation, there is family members interference, however, they are not directly involved in the management. Both of them still hold the power core. In T.F. and T.S.'s organization, it is much more complicated because there are four shareholders, two are brothers and two are friends, and there are three successors, two are cousins and one is not family related. For the vertical power struggle, the concept of the order of old and young, senior and junior plays a critical role in the conflict resolution. The old should give way to the young, and the young should respect the old. However, for the horizontal power struggle, mutual understanding and acceptance is critical. It has apparently been developed among the old generation but not so much amongst the young generation. C. has explained that because Chinese organization is human-centered, human being is the focus of any interaction. The positive side of it is the development of close human relationship, but the negative side of it is the power struggle.

C: Actually, conflict is inevitable. If there is no conflict, there is no need for management.

I: It seems that succession can create a lot of power conflict. Could we discuss about your view or plan of succession in your organization?

T.F.: We are Chinese business. We hope that our young generation will take over our business. Therefore we encourage them to study what is going to be helpful for our business. If we want to continue our business, we have to train up our new generation. In 1978, we started to plan for them to be the successors. We first discussed with our shareholders. Three out of four of us had sons studying in the pre-university. Three of them agreed to encourage their sons to succeed our work. We arranged for them to meet with us. The result was that they accepted it. Then we sent two of them abroad to study Food Science. One of them decided to stay in the National University of Singapore to study Business Administration. When they graduated and came back to join the company, the management became more complicated. We have many problems in change. Three of them are very different. Some are practical. Some are 人情 idealistic. Our older generation emphasize on emotion (Ren Chin). If we have any different views, we will slowly think about some ways to resolve. In terms of the employer-employee relation, we always make it feel like a family. But our young generation, they have their view points. They prefer a more comprehensive management method, more theoretical. Sometimes, they don't like the way it is done. There are many difficulties in the change.

T.S.: My father treats us very well. I stay because of my father. I have the obligation to work for this company. I don't like it because it is very massive. Family concern is very complicated. But I have the obligation because I am the eldest son. It becomes a lot of burden on me. Sometimes I felt very frustrated and wanted to quit.

T.EB.: My organization is also family business. I have some people in mind that I want to train. But we have to do it slowly. My brother is five years younger than I. He can do it. My son is now working in the organization. I want him to learn. He is my son. I will certainly pass it onto him if he is interested and if

he has the talent in this field. Otherwise; my brother and I have talked about selling it away after next five years.

C: We haven't really thought about succession. Our children are still young.

H: Succession is not a problem. It is a process. In Chinese saying, 生老病死 (Sheng Lao Bing Si), born, old, sick and die. It is natural. When you get older, you have to get somebody to take over, but according to their talents and interests. My sons are not interested in my business. I cannot force them. I have to find the people and cultivate them.

I: The common thing about your organizations is that it is all family business. But one has two generations, the father and son, working together. The succession has been planned and implemented since 1978. There are many problems in the transition. Two organizations which are owned by the brothers and sisters, T.EB. and T.YB.'s organization has some family interference because the two brothers are working in the same organization; C's organization has less problems because the family have a few organizations. The brothers and sisters have shares in all organizations but are not directly involved in the management of the same organization. In H case, successor will not be the family member because sons are not interested. It seems that in family business, it is preferred that the son will be the successor. However, whether obligation is more important than the individual interest and ability or vice versa depends on different organization. There are pros and cons in each case. For instance in T.S. case. He stays in the organization because of his obligation to his father. He feels frustrated and burdened. Whereas in H's situation, the sons are not interested, he has to look for other successor. As most of you have mentioned there are some Chinese organizations in Singapore that had died off because of failure in succession.

T.S.: It is the Chinese tradition. The first generation are very typical Chinese. They have that kind of concept, value and norm from China passed down from generation to generation. And it is family concern and never open door. If your second generation is not good,

the organization dies. If the second generation is better than the first, it grows.

C: In the traditional Chinese organization, there are some generation gaps. From the older generation's perspective, we can understand their thinking. Because in different generation, with different education, different life experience, we have generation gap problem. When the old generation passes on to the young generation, even sometimes among brothers, there are problems. In addition, there is the new technology and English language problem, the old generation often feel that they have no way to stand. Modernization, mechanization, computerization, strongly impact on the parental authority. They lost their power in the organization, and reduce their status in the family. The other problem is their different ways of doing things. The older generation experience the World War II disaster. They simply want to enjoy their peaceful old age. They don't want to see what they had accomplished with all their heart and blood gone like a river. They just want to maintain the present situation. They feel satisfied. But the new generation want to perform, want to accomplish something, want to breakthrough, very eager. This is not well accepted by the older generation. It is also one of the factors in the generation gap. Nowadays, there are more and more English-educated people. It will, to a certain extent affect the development of the traditional Chinese company. The first generation is those who grew up in disaster, the second generation, our generation, we can maintain our ancient heritage, the third generation are the English educated generation, they have very weak traditional concept, the fourth generation will be out of touch with the tradition. The evolution of the society will bring up many problems.

H: Singapore is a small country but has been progressing so fast. We encounter a lot of obstacles. Like a small tree, we grow very fast, suddenly there is a wind storm. We have to play low key now.

T.F.: The Singapore industry is progressing. We have to progress. The education mentality is different. If we continue our old way of management, it is going to be very difficult. It is a social problem. For example, in much work, we cannot use Chinese. Many companies are using English, even the boss are like me don't know



English. I used to do purchasing. Now I delegate to my son because they speak in English. The big associations, I ask the young generation to go because they speak English. However, in the daily work, we speak in dialect and Mandarin. In the meeting, we mix Mandarin and dialect too. The old directors, although they don't speak Mandarin, they do understand. Our three successors are highly educated, they don't like our old way.

I: The country is changing. The influence of the West seems to be increasing due to the influence of Western education. What other ways do you see this change?

T:EB: Now the street names are all changed. Mandarin title is taken out. They said they are afraid of Malay (the native). What to be afraid of? It is a problem. I don't speak English too. I want to learn, but I have no time. Since the boss doesn't speak English, the staff have to speak to me in Mandarin or dialect. It is mixed like the government agency. My brother does speak English. I am going to ask him to visit some countries for our future expansion in export market.

T.S.: Singapore is turning Western; it is inevitable. The majority of us here received English education, and went to university. Next time when we are expanding, we need more work force. All these people will be minimum university education level. So they receive Western management style. So it is inevitable that we bring in the Western culture into the organization. If we look, socially speaking, we are turning Western, no longer Chinese. So it becomes very natural that everything is Westernized. I speak both Chinese and English. I become the communication bridge between the old and new generation. I talk to the workers in their language.

H: It has become more important that we speak two languages. Like the new chairman of the association, he can't even speak English. It could create a lot of jokes if one doesn't translate properly. With the customer, I speak in their language. Like with China, because I speak in Mandarin, there is no traditional barrier. It is an advantage to build up business relationship.

C: I speak in different languages. I speak with my clients in their language. With Indonesian, I speak

Indonesian. I speak both Chinese and English to my staff.

### Summary

The following is a summary of the characteristics of traditional Chinese management as identified by the interviewees:

1. Chinese management emphasizes on emotion 人情 (Ren Chin).
2. Chinese management is human-centered. Managing human relationships is important in management.
3. Trust 信用 (Xin Yong) is the foundation and capital of an organization. It is important to gain trust from other people. To gain trust is to keep one's promises.
4. To trust people, one has to make judgement. A good judgement is based on experiences.
5. When trust is emphasized, contract is not necessary.
6. It is important to listen and observe first before any judgement. Like the Chinese Gong Fu, Chinese value reservation.
7. Chinese are hardworking people. They are not calculative about time.
8. Chinese management is 親力親為 (Chin Li Chin Wuay) The managers are involved in everything.
9. Chinese organization is family-centered. All the key personnel are usually family related members.
10. Chinese organization often started with a small size, and maintained as a small or medium-sized operation.
11. There is no organizational chart.
12. There is no clear-cut and formal objectives.



13. Decision making is usually on an ad-hoc basis.
14. Long-term planning is seldom made. Planning is usually short-term and not written down.
15. The distance between the top management and workers is small.
16. The successors are usually the sons of the shareholders.
17. There is a power core in the center of Chinese organization, and this power core lies with the boss(es), who are usually family.
18. Power struggle, as a result of conflicts, is a significant phenomena in Chinese organization, particularly when there is succession issue and multiple core families.

## Scene 2 : The Contrast Between Chinese Management And Western Management

While defining what Chinese management is, most of the interviewees tended to define what is not Chinese management by contrasting Chinese management with Western management. It seems to be inevitable to make the comparison because, as identified by many interviewees, Singapore is becoming more Westernized.

The following is the contrast abstracted from all the interviews that the interviewees identified as the difference between Western and Chinese management. The descriptions are quoted from the original transcripts.

### Contrast In Chinese and Western Management

#### 1. Open door vs close door (Public proclamations vs privacy)

"In terms of Chinese management, we are very close door. We never want to announce or to show people that what we have achieved. It may be that they are more humble in their way of life or they have the obligation to protect their business. In Western management you always tell people what you have achieved. It becomes a very proud kind of issue that you announce to public that you have achieved".

#### 2. Change vs Static

"In the Western concept, you must change and must improve yourself. In the Chinese concept, you remain static, stay there and hope that it lasts forever".

#### 3. Rules vs Feelings and emotions

"Western management has no feelings. There are rules and norms that one has to follow, and it is set by the top management. Chinese management emphasizes feelings and emotion".

#### 4. Performance vs Relationship

"In Western management, we always believe that we judge the person on performance. When a person makes a mistake, he has to leave. In Chinese management, you depend a lot on the relationships. You always forgive a person when he makes a mistake".

#### 5. Clear Organization chart vs No organization chart

"In Western organizations, they emphasize a lot on organizational chart. You don't find any Chinese organization that has an organizational chart".

#### 6. Objectives vs obligation

"In Western organizations, they have formal objectives. Clear objectives provide a clear direction for everybody. In Chinese organizations, everybody works for their obligation, for their boss. The boss also feels obligated to take care of the workers".

#### 7. Long term planning vs no proper planning

"Western management has long term planning. They write down on paper their prediction for the next three or five years. In Chinese management, we can never sit down to discuss sales budget, future program and projection. Planning is done in the head but not written down on paper".

#### 8. Expertise vs non expertise

"Western companies hire expertise to work; Chinese companies hire people, they don't hire expertise".

#### 9. Selective vs all good

"Western companies are very selective. They select their clients and are strict on their collection. Chinese believes that everything is good. They are afraid to offend their clients".

#### 10. Promotion based on Performance vs Performance based on experience and good personality.

"In Western management, promotion criteria is based upon a person's performance. In Chinese management, the promotion criteria is based upon his

experience and his good personality. There is no formal evaluation on individual performance".

#### 11. Delegation vs involvement

"In Western management, when you delegate a task and responsibility, you don't care how they do it. What you want is the result. In Chinese management, you have to know everything. You intervene in their work and help them to resolve their problems".

#### 12. Clear Accountability vs vague accountability

"In Western management, the job description is clear. The accountability and responsibility is clear cut. In Chinese management, one could be accountable to many people or no one is accountable for the job. It is very unclear".

#### 13. Facts vs instincts

"The classical Chinese make decision according to instincts and what their experience tells them. They don't support it with facts. In Western management, they have some mechanism such as cost-benefit analysis to help in decision making".

#### 14. Long vs short decision making chain

"In Western management, you have to go through many steps to make a decision. A lot of people have to sit on it. In Chinese management, the boss can see faster, react faster and make the decision directly".

#### 15. Formal meeting vs ad-hoc meeting

"In Western management, there are formal and regular meetings. Agenda and time is given. In Chinese management, there is no regular meeting. Informal meeting and discussion is held anytime when there is a problem or issue".

#### 16. Recording vs no recording

"In Western management, everything said in the meeting is recorded. There is no recording in Chinese management".

#### 17. Contract vs Trust

"In Western company, you need contract in business. In Chinese style, contract is not necessary most of the time. They rely on trust. It is important to keep one's promise, to trust people and to be trusted".

18. Marketing concept vs no marketing concept

"In Western company, they have budget, forecast, cost-benefit analysis. In Chinese management, marketing is sales. We don't plan for any marketing strategy or promotion".

19. High expense vs low expense

"In Western companies, although they make a lot of profit, they spend a lot. In Chinese company they earn less, they spend less too".

20. Big vs small gap between top management and employees

"In Western companies, you don't know who is the M.D. or chairman. If you want to complain, you have to go through many people. If you are at the bottom, your voice may not be heard. In Chinese companies, you know your M.D. If you are not happy, you can talk to the top managers. You see each other and talk to each other everyday. It is closer".

21. Indirect vs direct communication

"In Western company, you have to go through many people to get something. In Chinese company, the boss is closer to the staff. You go direct to the person and not through the secretary".

22. Fixed time vs flexible time

"Western company has fixed working hours. Chinese are very hardworking. They do not calculate about the time".

23. Firing or letting go vs no sacking people out

"In Western company, when you make a mistake, you have to go. In Chinese company, we never sack people. If he makes a mistake, never mind, give him a chance. He may do better in the future".

Conclusion

Interviewee C. has given an analysis of the problem in Westernization and/or the integration of Eastern and Western. More discussion will be done in Chapter 6.

"The integration of Eastern and Western, the biggest problem is that one does not really know what is Eastern and Western. In this situation, to integrate will create big problems. Within the Eastern, what is good and what is bad has already been very debatable. What we choose for ourselves as good and bad may not be right for us. The wrong choice is very possible to create a very different effect. And even after we make the real choice, the choice may not be workable.

The West could bring in both good and bad things. Presently, the biggest contradiction between the East and the West is that the Eastern people always choose the worst side of East to criticise. For Chinese the weakness is not being able to be open to learn and understand others. When you have no such intention, you will not be able to understand others. And before we understand other people, we should not make any judgement.

All these are fundamental problems. The fundamental problems are already so complicated. Then the complicated choice results in the direction we are now moving. Moving in this path, of course you will realize that in the give and take of the two, they are still in many situations contradicting, mutually exclusive. It is like.... I don't know so-called Eastern and Western. Sometimes, in many situations, the intellectuality and emotion is always mixing and contradicting. In operationalization, it may be still a relatively big problem when execute it.

We are still searching. For sure, what is Singapore ultimately going to become? Until when is it ultimate? After ten years, twenty years, or a hundred years is that what meant by ultimate? and what is this ultimate? We don't know. But what we are sure is that we will not be the past conservative Eastern. Even if we really westernize, it is impossible that we are totally Americanized. Till the end, we are still Chinese Westernization or Singaporean Westernization".



Scene 3: Dilemma Between The Old And Young  
Generation; Dilemma In Integrating Western  
And Chinese Management

The problem of Westernization or the integration of Eastern and Western management is manifested in organizations that have two generations working together. The old generation is the pioneer, and the young generation is the successor. Due to the different histories, different life experience and different education, the generation gap is a significant phenomena in many Chinese organizations. T.F. and T.S.'s organization is a good case for elaboration on the generation gap in organization management. They hold different perspectives on how should the organization be managed.

Two dialogues are created in the following. All description is quoted from the original transcripts. The first one is a dialogue between T.F. and T.S, the old and new generations. It contrasts their different perspectives on what management is. The second one is an internal dialogue of T.S. who identifies himself as very 'Chinese', who "still behaves and thinks in Chinese way", but "wants to implement Western

management style" in the way he works. In his description of his organization, he presented some contradictions and dilemmas in trying to integrate Chinese and Western management. On one hand, he complained about traditional Chinese management, on the other hand, he still practiced the traditional Chinese management style. The contradictions did not necessarily mean conflicts. It revealed the struggle of integrating Western and Chinese management.

Dialogue One - Dilemma Between The Old and Young Generation

This dialogue presents the different perspectives of T.F. (the father) and T.S. (the son), who work in the same organization, on Chinese management and the way they manage.

**The old management style--The young generation style.**

T.S: Our organization is 100% Chinese type of management style. It is very different from what we have learned in school, what we think about other organizations. What we emphasize is on obligation. It is the long term relationship that counts. Everything is relationship. The management style becomes ad-hoc basis. Decision is ad-hoc basis, problem solution is ad-hoc basis, meeting is ad-hoc basis. We go to management class. They, the Western countries, emphasize a lot on organizational chart. You don't find any Chinese organization that has an organizational chart. There is no proper planning, no clear objective, no budget, no marketing strategy, no projection and forecast. Everytime when I give them a picture, it becomes a separate story. Their ability to accept the

knowledge and concept is very different. Just like if you give them a picture ask them to write a story. My story and their story will be totally different. Totally. No way near.

T.F: I never read any books about Business Administration.

What I know is based on our thirty years of difficulties and experiences. Our older generation emphasize emotion 感情 (Kan Chin), emphasize human emotion 人情 (Ren Chin). Our way of doing things is based on relationships. Among the shareholders, if we have any different views, we will slowly think about some ways to resolve them. In terms of the employer-employee relation, we always make it feel like a family. But the young generation, they have their view points. Sometimes they show that they don't like the way it is done. They prefer to have a more comprehensive management method. They want to apply some business administration theory into our organization. More theoretical.

**I don't intervene. I want an effective result ----- I intervene. I should care and help.**

T.S.: For example, I believe in performance reward. If you are a boss, you give me the authority. I am holding this position as a manager. I should have certain kind of privileges, power, and authority. As long as it falls within my job respect, I must hold the responsibility. Therefore I make the decision. You don't have to keep an eye close to me, and observe how I do it. Because what you want is the result. When my subordinate work, I don't care how they do it. What I want is an effective result. I keep an eye on them. But I don't interfere with them. That is the worst. Certain freedom to work. And that is the way to find out whether the person is good or not good. For example, in a very classical electronic company. You are a production manager. You have a certain job description. Other division managers cannot interfere you. They can't tell you what to do. You can turn them off even though they are more senior than you. You only report to your plant manager. That is very clear cut. Whereas here, same production manager is accountable to the directors, to the managers, to everybody. It is very difficult to draw the line. You know that kind of perception in Chinese organization. It is very unclear.

T.F.: As a manager, I have to know everything. If I don't know, when my workers come to ask me for help, I won't be able to. Therefore I have to know everything. Everyday I will go and inspect every department's work. I walk around in the factory to see whether they have any problems. I watch them. I manage every kind of work. Because all these technology were mine originally. Therefore whether they do it right, I know. Therefore I inspect them to see whether they do it right. If the work is too difficult for them, I will not ask them to do. Also to see whether the person-in-charge of the department needs my help. I will ask them whether they have any issues or problems. We as a boss have to be responsible. They will then know that we are concerned about their job. We have to let them know that we are concerned about every department. I have to care. If I don't care, I shouldn't be here holding the authority position and the salary.

#### **Objective ----- Obligation.**

T.S.: Everybody works for their obligation here. The workers feel obligated to work for the boss, the boss feel obligated to take care of them. There is no clear cut objectives. I need to have objectives to guide my direction. When I ask them what is our objective for next year? They don't know. So I have to set my own objectives irrespective of their thinking. I can't work without a direction. I believe such thing does not exist in any Western organizations. . .

T.F.: Our organization is a family enterprise. We started very small. At that time, it was very difficult to find a job. When we started our business, some friends and relatives came to ask us to help their sons, to allow them to come and learn in the organization. Some of them are still with us since the beginning. Therefore with the old staff, our relationship is more related as relatives or friends. When the organization grows, especially when the young generation come in, we discovered that their education mentality is different. There are many difficulties. However we treat these old workers and staff as they have contributed to the development of the company. We will try our best to keep them and help them. We will try not to change their work, unless there is a very good method and opportunity to do it. Don't ever hurt



their heart. We don't want other people to say that as our business grows, we set our old staffs. We shouldn't do that. It is a Chinese traditional value.

### **Individual's responsibility -- Boss's responsibility.**

T.S.: For example, my sales people. When we changed the design of the product, we failed. The salesmen said the provision shops do not want it because they can't recognize the product. I said that that was not a problem. You sales people are supposed to do sales. You are supposed to sell the concept. They couldn't understand and wouldn't do it, because they were spoiled. For the past years, they have been working in this company. They become the born lucky kind of sales people. When I asked them to do a projection, till now I haven't received any. Looking at their background, I cannot push my concept across.

T.F.: Since the very beginning, we don't differentiate work. The boss has no privilege. We do all the big and little things together. For the job that is too difficult, we will not ask them to do. Don't make them feel difficult. If they have any difficulty, we have to help them. We have to bear the responsibility. I know that our sales people dare not take responsibility. May be they have low education, they dare not bear the responsibility. How are we going to think about a way to make them secure and accept it? I don't know. But we still support their work, appreciate the fact that they are working very hard.

### **Suppressing individual talents ----- Conforming to the majority.**

T.S. : In the Chinese organization, whether a person is good, whether one's performance is better than the others, this is not the question. The boss plans, decides what to do, and then tell certain people to do it accordingly. In another words, we become the people that execute the instruction. We don't plan, don't think, but just execute. I think it is unhealthy. It is sort of suppressing a person's talents. And that way we cannot tell whether a person is good or not. I can only tell to a certain limit that whether he is responsible, whether his reaction is fast enough, and that is all. I cannot fully explore his potential. That is pretty sad.

T.F.: Everybody has different personality and temperament. I think the most important thing is to conform to the majority. When we have any problems, we usually discuss it and come up with a conclusion. Despite how we do it, we can always find one conclusion that is more acceptable to the majority people. If that is the majority view, we will follow the majority view to implement it. Everybody doesn't have the same view, especially our three young generation. But we should conform to the majority.

**Absolute decision ----- Relative decision.**

T.S.: When I told the directors that we can sell the old and new products together, I couldn't get the concept across. My father said no because the sales people went to talk to him. My boss is my father. He is protecting me. He is afraid that I might fail. I was very angry. Back to the same problem. Everything is very ambiguous. When you are the boss, you are the boss. I as a manager, my decision is not an absolute decision. It could be overwritten any time, which I felt very unhappy. Because I am not able to prove to myself and other people that I am able to do it.

T.F.: In terms of decision, it depends on what role, what department you are in. I am the Managing Director. Department managers manage their department. The senior person is the Managing Director. It depends. If the manager is doing well, then we don't have to worry. We will feel more relaxed with him. But we still have to know how he is doing. The spirit still has to be there.

**The designation has no meaning ----- The job is more important than the title.**

T.S.: The designation to us has no meaning. It is what they made clear from the beginning. It is for external identification. It is very family type. You cannot say that I am more senior or more level higher than you are. I am a manager, I have to get my hands dirty sometimes. We cannot say that this is not my job, neither can I deny that this is not my job. So whatever happens you just have to do it.

T.F.: Our concept is like this: the most important thing is not a matter of manager or not manager, the most important thing is their job. Because we have a



board of directors, and other colleagues, many of them have very long experience.

They can tell how is their performance. But when they first came in, they wanted to make card. At that time, they wanted to print manager. I checked with some other friends, some said good, other said no good. I think they really like to be manager. If you don't give them the title, they may not be happy.

### **My father ----- My son**

T.S.: Sometimes I feel that my father is over protective. I consider myself as an employee here. I never take advantage that he is my father. It is too bad that I am his son. I like to be in this post, but it is too bad that the Managing Director is my father. I am selected to be the General Manager because I fit into the post, because I work very hard. If the other two successors are as good as me, it will become a clearer picture to the public that I can achieve because I have the capability. Right now, who can tell that I really achieve it? Some people thought that it was because my father is the Managing Director. I feel very insulted.

T.F.: Actually my son is more flexible and practical. He is selected as the General Manager as a result of the shareholders discussion. The shareholders felt that he is more responsible. He does everything. He would not avoid responsibility, or be too idealistic about things. He is more able to accept things. He can be involved in the big and little jobs in the whole factory. Moreover, other colleagues who have any difficulty, they will approach him. Many workers said that he is not bossy, and doesn't have the university graduate ego. When they have any difficulty, or any problems in work, he will be willing to help.

### **My problem ----- My difficulty**

T.S.: Right now my problem is from my level up, the board of directors, the managing director. From my level down, there is no problem. They are willing to comply with me. They follow my instruction.

T.F.: The difficulty right now is that we have mixed generations. If we don't change..... because our old

generation management style is more old management style, more emotion 人情 (Ren Chin) way of dealing with things. The new generation may not accept, or unable to accept. Therefore if the organization management method is not changed, there will be a lot of difficulties. For example, our old generation. The attitudes toward the career, our way of managing the work is more step by step following the path. My observation of the young generation is that if they follow our way, they will not be satisfied. They hope to use a more speedy method to promote the work. Using the more speedy method to handle the work, you cannot continue to transmit on our old concepts. Moreover the education levels are different. Our three successors are highly educated. If we still find more relatives and friends for them, if their management style is different from us, it may create a lot of difficulties. We are also worried about this problem. Therefore we have to take it slowly. We try to hire more outsiders.

**It is inevitable that we will be westernized ----- I don't know what is going to evolve in the future.**

T.S.: Now in Singapore, the majority of us here received English education, and went to university. Next time when we are expanding, we need more work force. All these people, their minimum education will be university level. So they receive Western management style. So it is inevitable that we bring in the Western culture into the organization. If we look, socially speaking, look at our Singapore. We are turning Western, no longer Chinese. So it becomes very natural that everything is more Westernized. I suppose when you look at our company, you perceive as a Chinese company, our product, you perceive the traditional Chinese product. We are trying to get rid of that image. We want to tell the public, especially English educated people that look, we are a modern factory. We produce good product.

T.F.: Singapore is progressing. We cannot have no progress. The government organizations provide training courses to motivate change. We send people for these training. But they need to have at least secondary school education to understand and absorb the training course. The old staff here are more related as relatives and friends. We will keep them till they retire. But they need to be trained and helped. But .

their education is too little to go for such training. It is very difficult. For example, the language problem. It is a social problem. I don't know why? Actually much work can still be done in Chinese. I also come across many companies that all their documents are in English. In fact the boss is like me doesn't know English. We have to use English in the letter writing. But we speak Mandarin and Hokkien in work and in the meeting. The big associations now all speak in English. Our young generation will represent the company to participate. I still join the Soy Sauce Association, the association of our own. From what I see in the present circumstance, it is still difficult. What is going to evolve in the future? I don't know either. Based on the present situation, the succession of the new generation from the old generation, my idea is that to continue using family entrepreneur management will not be ideal. Our organization may need to be changed. We have to apply management approaches more flexibly.

#### **They are afraid of Change -- Should change gradually.**

T.S: The old generation are afraid of change. They have this planted concept in mind that cannot change. Once it is there, it must be there forever. For example, when I first proposed the idea to redesign the label, the whole idea was completely rejected because they said nobody will recognize the product. They circled around the problem. Today change just a little bit, the second day change the other part. It take another 20 years and we will still be there. My concept is that I must keep improving. If I am not improving, others improve. I am going backward. You must keep going. That is something that they do not think about.

T.F.: From my view point, it depends on what organization. Sometimes like us we have old and new generation mixing together. If apply it all, I feel it is very difficult. Should be changed gradually. I am not objecting it, but I feel that it should be a gradual change. For example, if the person in charge of this department is old generation, if we want to change him, we have to slowly convince him. If that person is retired. We can find a new generation. Then we can use the new management method to manage. My intention is to encourage them to change it gradually.

T.S.: The bosses always tell us that I have been working for 35 years. My experience tells me that you must do this. I have nothing to say. When I try to convince them that you must give me a chance to prove it to you that my thinking is correct, my concept is correct. You don't let me test, you don't test me, you don't let me practice it, how do you evaluate my performance. If I can prove it to you that this scheme is going to be successful. Until now, we cannot sell them our concepts successfully.

T.F.: From what I see, presently our organization is still relatively conservative. It seems that it is not able to satisfy the young generation. Because the old generation started from a very small organization and keep working on it, till our present size. Frankly speaking, we the older generation has already felt a very heavy responsibility. Therefore if we are going to continue expanding, if the new generation doesn't come in to match with us, we won't be able to hold the responsibility. But they seem to see our company as very little. Some of them like to do big export business. They want to expand it. I told my son: If you use those management theory into this organization, you will have many difficulties. Because the Western theory has its own concepts. They may not match us. However, since there are still many old staff, hopefully the new generation will gradually learn the older generation's approach.

Dialogue Two (Internal-Dialogue of T.S.): Dilemma In Integrating Western And Chinese Management

This is an internal dialogue of T.S. In the interviews, he presented some contradictions in describing the way he managed. On one hand, he complained the weakness of Chinese management, and the problems that the traditional Chinese management created; on the other hand, he still practiced the traditional Chinese management concepts in his work



situations. The following are some quotes from his descriptions.

**They play a lot in emotion ---- I still play a lot of feelings.**

"What we emphasize is on obligation. Family relationships play a lot. Everything is relationship. We play a lot in emotion. For example, one of my uncles. He has the worst performance. Other people are making thousands dollars a month. He is only making seven hundred a month. I can't change him. I am only hoping that he retires slowly. As far as I am concern, I have no obligation to keep you until you die. That is the problem. We play a lot in emotion. Another example is one of the staff, he can't even issue the invoice properly. But he is in the business for so many years. I can't change it. The infrastructure is such. We can't change it over night".

"My cousin and I have different opinions, but I still play a lot of feelings because as far as I am concerned, he is my own relative. If I don't support him, who is going to support him? Provided the decision is right, I support him. It might not be a good one. It might be different from my thinking, but I still support him because as far as I am concerned, he is my family member..... In the future, I hope that my staff will work for me for their working life. And this is a Chinese concept. I want them to feel like a family".

**They work for the obligation to the boss ----- I work for the obligation to my father.**

"Most of the staff here, right from the companies started, 34 years ago. Among friends they formed the business. Those workers who have been working for them are still working for us now. It is that kind of long term relationships that count. They feel that they are in one family. They feel obligated. Likewise the bosses also feel obligated to take care of them".

"I must stay back because of my father. I think I have a lot to give in. I have the obligation to work for this company. I don't like to work in this company

honestly because it is very messy in this company. I have the obligation because I am the eldest son. There is no other replacement. So next time my son or my future generation, what is going to happen if this company stays to next generation. I would like to see somebody taking over this company, my son or my daughter. I would like to see it carried on".

**I always see myself as an employee here ----- I am obligated to my father.**

"I never see myself as a family member here. I always see myself as an employee here. Likewise for my father, every time he is not in, I take over. I correct him that don't say that next time I am going to take over. It might not be true. Sometimes I thought that I want to get into this company. I want to gain my reward. Their explanation is that you belong to this company which I refuse to accept. The contradiction is there".

"My father treat us very well. Treats all of us very well in the family. Give us education. That is all I ask for. And I have the obligation to work for this company. I don't like to work here because it is massive. Family concern, very complicated. I don't like it. But I have the obligation because I am the eldest son. There is no other replacement".

**We should judge based on performance ----- The key personnel should still remain in our family concern.**

"In Western management, we always believe that we judge on the person's performance, in terms of their performance. In the Chinese management, you depend a lot on the relationships. A person is promoted because he has experience and good personality".

"The key personnel will still have to remain in our family concern. That is family concern. I think that has to remain Chinese. Because when a person leaves, it will upset the system. For example, our accounts clerk. She is an outsider. She has been here for six years. Very efficient, very good. But I have some concern. What is going to happen when she resigns? If she is my sister and she has to resign, I am going to tell her to resign six months later until I find a replacement. She has that kind of obligation. If she is an outsider, she doesn't give a damn. If it is my own family personnel,



I have no worry at all as far as she performs her job. Of course, there is a risk to take if this particular person is no good. But we can make it up, by employing a good assistant. If you are totally dependent on an outsider, once he leaves, you finish".

**We should be more "open-door" like the American -----  
We should remain Chinese in terms of key personnel so  
that we can protect our know-how.**

"The Americans are very open minded. Chinese, on the other end, is too extreme. I think because Western management is more open. Chinese is very closed. We become very narrow minded. And once you become narrow minded, you cut yourself away from other people. Whereas Westernized, they open it up. Good things, people learn. Everybody is very organized..... If I didn't go to Japan, I would never do it. Likewise, if other people don't learn from us, they will also never improve. And that is where we shut the door. My idea is that we should be open. I can achieve something, you can copy".

"I can see that the key personnel should remain Chinese. The important posts are still family concern. We still remain Chinese. So that we can protect our know-how. We can protect our interest for the company. For instance, R&D product development. I have to do it myself. They do not believe that outsider can do the work because they may bring everything away".

**I want to be dispensible ----- I am the right person  
to manipulate.**

"If I really leave the company, I am leaving a lot of mess. They become too dependent on me. This is what I do not like to see. I keep telling them I am going to make myself very dispensible, but I do not know why they still rely a lot on me. For example past one week, I have been away. When I come back, suddenly I have so much work. I thought I was very dispensible, but in fact I am not. I become very indispensable to them. Because a lot of decisions are waiting for me".

"If the person can manipulate the situation very well, he will become very successful. For example, if I think I can manipulate the situation very well, power core is very narrow, I can get a lot of work done very

effectively. There is no red-tape. That is provided you can get the right person. In future it may still remain the very narrow core, but it still remains very effective, because I have the right attitude. I am the right person to do the job. Then it is so much better than the Western management because I can get the work done very effectively. Every concern becomes the family concern".

**When you are the boss, you are the boss ----- Imagine that I alone controlling the three managers, I am the center core.**

"When you are the boss, you are the boss. My decision is not an absolute decision. It could be overwritten any time, which I felt very unhappy. Because I am not able to prove to myself and other people that I am able to do that".

"The decision chain is shorter. You group under it. If I am the center core. I get a picture here and I get a picture there. Digest. Instead of taking stage by stage come all the way up. Just imagine I alone controlling these three managers directly. Instead of first manager going to the second manger because the second manager has to know the picture of the first manager, and the third level manager must understand the second and the first. And then come to the top position".

### **Summary**

Dialogue One showed the dilemma between the old and new generations. While the old generation are practicing traditional Chinese management based on their many years experience in Chinese organization, the young generation, having being exposed to the Western management concepts, is challenging the traditional Chinese management style. The different concepts and values of organization and management from

the two perspectives of old and young generations creates dilemmas in the organization.

Dialogue Two presented an internal dialogue of T.S. who attempted to blend both Chinese and Western management. On one hand, he identified the weakness of Chinese management, and try to Westernize; on the other hand, he wanted to retain the Chinese values. It was a dilemma. As he himself put it: "I do agree that it is very difficult to distinguish what is good is good and what is bad is bad. It is good yet it is bad. It depends on how you take it, depends on the situation. If the person can manipulate the situation very well, he will be very successful. If you practice Chinese management, you have a right person, the power core is narrow, a lot of work can be done effectively. Then it is much better than the Western management..... Why Chinese management fail? Because the mismanipulation of the power core. If such thing is not there, I don't see why Chinese management cannot be any better than the others". In essence, T.S. believes that power core is the core of Chinese management. A right person and a group of key personnel from the family with some appropriately selected Western concept and attitudes will lead to successful Chinese management.

#### **SCENE 4: Metaphors Of Chinese Organization And Management**

Scene 4 will present the metaphors used or which have evolved in interviewees' description. They will be sorted into coherent groups. Four metaphors emerged. A meta-metaphor which grasps the subjective experience and interpretation of Chinese management will be explored.

#### **Metaphors**

##### **1. Organization as a "FAMILY"**

Manager is the "PARENT" of the "CHILDREN"

H's description

"Organization is like our baby who is growing up"

"You want to see your baby growing up, get married and have children"

"Organization is our second life"

"Organization is like a family. Manager is the head of the family. I have many sons and daughters, and in-laws. You let them control. They have quarrel and fights. You can't keep telling them 'Why don't you study?' 'Why do you spend so much money?'".

"You cultivate them"

T.EB.'s description

"Organization is like a family. Manager is the parent who feed the children"

"The big and small has to be cooperative"

"If the family members are not obedient, how to be a family?"

"Harmony in family brings prosperity"

"The way we take care of the staff is like the way we take care of our children"

"We have to send them to school, feed them and ask them to take shower"

"He is loyal to the organization"

"You allow your own people, your brother to cheat you, but not the outsider"

"If he make mistake, forgive him, give him a chance to change"

"I am older, he has to give way to me a little bit"

"There is inequality in partnership, just like there is inequality among brothers and sisters"

"Among the the brothers, the parents can't love them all the same. They love all, but three or four children who are more capable, you love them more. It is not love them more, but care about them more. Those who are not obedient, how to take care of them?"

"The big shareholder should give way to the small shareholder; the small shareholder should respect the big shareholder"

#### C's description

"I see the organization as my second family"

"We enhance our personal relationships and understanding"

"People are related as brothers and sisters in the organization"

"The concept of the order of old and young. The young has to respect the old, and the old should allow the young more"

"To create a family atmosphere and relationship will enhance a sense of belongingness"

#### T. S's description

"I hope they work for me for their working life. I want to make them feel like a family"

#### 2. Organization as a "PERSON"

Manager is the "SOUL" of the "PERSON'S IDEOLOGY AND GOAL".

## C's description

"I am the soul of the organization"

"I am the central to motivate the organization"

"If I collapse, the organization will have a great impact".

"Close human relations"

"Power struggle is our human nature and weakness"

"Human being is the center of interaction"

"Everybody wants appreciation. It is also human nature"

"In my organization, I expand it based on my own ideology and goal"

"I hope that I can have a sense of security in living"

"The spirit has to be there"

"It is because of who I am"

"It has a lot to do with my personal value"

"To balance my material and spiritual life"

"He will get reputation"

"His status will be outstanding"

"A good person will acculturate a group of intelligent people"

"Good people will do something good"

## H's description

"Succession is a process. Born, old, sick, die, it is all natural"

"Heroes create the situation"

## 3. Organization as "POWER MANIPULATION"

Manager as the "RIGHT PERSON" to "MANIPULATE THE SITUATION"

## T.S.'s description

"When you are the boss, you are the boss"

"They never comply with my instruction"

"There is a power core right in the center"

"My decision can be overwritten by the boss anytime"

"We need a right person in this organization"

"You only know the boss, other than that no one else"

"All the key personnel falls within the family"

"Power core is narrow"

"I still believe in centralized"

"Plan for the right successor"



"You plan, you decide what to do and you tell certain people to do it"  
 "To use the right kind of person to do the right kind of job"  
 "Consult me on decision"  
 "To move to push the peak further up"  
 "The power core remains narrow because if you get the right person, it is very effective, very efficient"  
 "I get a picture here, a picture there, digest"  
 "You must know what is happening in the organization"  
 "He failed, I take over"  
 "My problem is from my level up"  
 "Chinese management fails because of mismanipulation"  
 "It is good yet it is bad. It depends on how you take it, depends on the situation. If the person can manipulate the situation very well, he will become successful"  
 "The manager only do planning, make important decision"

#### 4. Organization as a "MACHINE"

Manager is the "ENGINE" to energize the "PARTS"

#### T.F.'s description

"Organization is a machine. The main brain person is the engine of the machine"  
 "The engine of the machine. The motor"  
 "If the motor is not turned on, all others will not move"  
 "Everyday I have to have everyday routine work in mind".  
 "You turn on to energize"  
 "Energize all the movements of the every departments"  
 "Management means that in every of our departments, all the jobs have an appointed person to manage"  
 "It is to manage people to manage the job"  
 "Help them in their work,  
 "You must let him feel that he can swallow, if you push him, he will resent"  
 "I have to know every parts, understand everything"  
 "I walk around to see whether they have any problems"  
 "Conform to the majority"  
 "You have to go and watch everyday"  
 "To motivate every department to work"

"Leadership ability means cooperation relationship with the person in charge of every department"  
"We are more step by step follow the path"

The four metaphors display the four conception of Chinese organization and management. Each metaphorical system highlights certain aspects of organizational reality and together they provide a rich structure for the reality of Chinese organization.

The **ORGANIZATION AS A FAMILY** metaphor portrays a picture of parents and children in a family. The concepts of the order of old and young, senior and junior, obedience and cooperation, harmony and prosperity are the ideology of a Chinese family. Manager plays the role of the parent who takes care, culturates and discipline the children.

In the **ORGANIZATION AS A PERSON** metaphor, organization is described as a human being that has a life, human nature and human needs. There are practical and spiritual aspects in the organizational reality. The role of a manager is the soul of a human being who demonstrates his ideology and values.

In the **ORGANIZATION AS POWER MANIPULATION**, the highlight is on the power relationships, including father and son, shareholders and workers, old and new

generation. The power varies from authority power, relationship power, expert power, to family power. Power struggle among and within people is the reality. The manager is the power manipulator, who will manipulate the situation for organizational success.

The **ORGANIZATION AS A MACHINE** metaphor characterizes organization as parts that need to be coordinated and managed. The emphasis of this metaphor is on the engine and energy flow. Without the engine, there is no energy flow, and the machine will not work. The role of a manager is to energize the different parts of the machine.

By isolating the predominant metaphors, the current reality and conceptions of the Chinese managers can be described in varying degrees. Metaphor analysis produces a description of the system of metaphors used by members to conceptualize their particular organization. Because the description is presented in the members' own language, it retains the implications of their reality.

However, the total meaning of the metaphors depend on the context in which they are placed. Simply knowing the metaphors may not be sufficient, since

experience consists of a complicated interplay among metaphors. We need a meta-metaphor that captures the whole network of inter-metaphorical relationship. One possible way, in this particular study, is to look at the meaning of the Chinese characters 組織 (Zu Zhi) organization, and 管理 (Kuan Li), management.

Chinese language itself is very metaphorical. Many of the Chinese words could be flexibly used as nouns, adjectives, or verbs, and their sequence is determined by grammatical rules as well as the emotional context of the sentence. It is a sound symbol which has strong suggestive powers, bringing to mind an indeterminate complex of pictorial images and emotions. The Chinese character is not just an abstract sign, but is an organic pattern which preserves the full complex of images and the suggestive power of the work. For example, the word "Organization" means literally 組織 (Zu Zhi). It can be used as a verb as well as a noun. 組 (Zu) means "to organize, form", 織 (Zhi) means "to weave, knit". Both characters belong to 糸 category, which means 糸 form the left side of the character. 絲 (Szu) itself means silk, thread, or a threadlike thing. In other words, "organization" in Chinese characters is associated to "silk, thread and woven into fabric".

"Management" is usually translated into 管 (Kuan Li). It can be used both as a verb and noun. It combines the two words 管 (Kuan) and 理 (Li). 管 (Kuan), means "to govern, to care for". 理 (Li) has a few meanings: a. "reason, principle, the fitness of things, right as an abstract principle"; b. "put in order, tidy up"; c. "reason, logic, truth"; d. "pay attention to, acknowledge"; e. "texture or grain (in wood, skin etc.)".

"Management" can also be translated into 經營 (Jing Ying), which combines the words of 經 (Jing) and 營 (Ying). 經 Jing have different meanings: a. "channels"; b. "manage, deal in, engage in"; c. "constant, regular"; d. "scripture, canon, classics"; e. "pass through, undergo"; f. "as a result of, after, through"; g. "stand, bear, endure".

營 (Ying) means "to seek, operate" (The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary, 1979).

An analysis of the Chinese metaphorical language will be useful in understanding the Chinese conception. However, much of the imagery of Chinese may be lost in an English translation, which implies an inherent limitation of the present study.

The following diagram (Diagram 4) shows the meta-metaphor of the Chinese conception of management in the Chinese organization.

The meta-metaphor is "a piece of Chinese silk fabric" that is woven by four basic colors of threads. These four basic colors are the symbols of a "person", a "machine", a "family" and "power manipulation". With the mixture of the four colors, the fabric shows the different coloration of the design.

This meta-metaphor of "a piece of Chinese silk fabric" captures the inseparable co-existing realities that are woven together. It also captivates the meanings of logic, orderliness, and fitness; and the feelings of knitting with love and care.



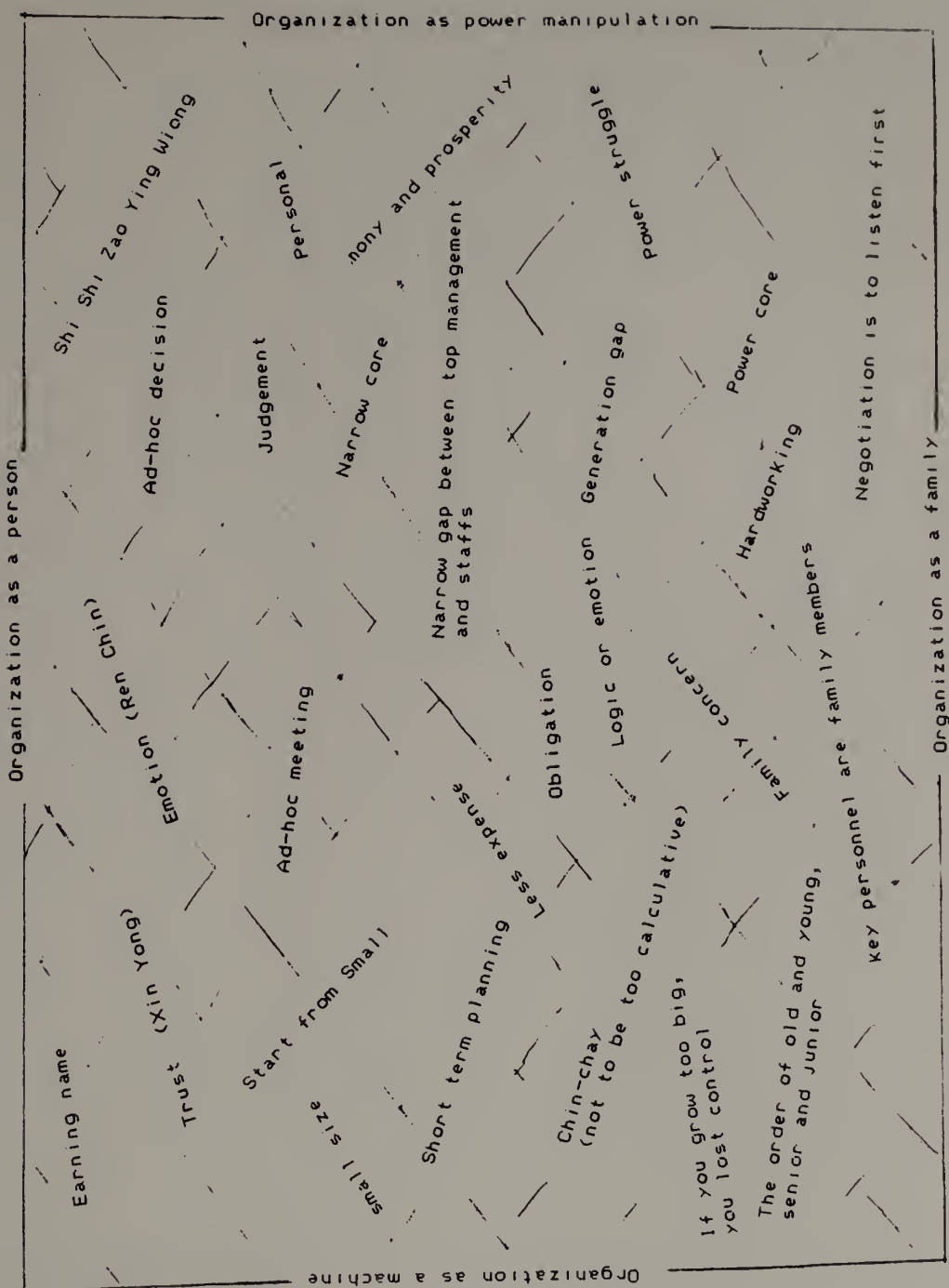


Diagram 4 : A Meta-metaphor - A Piece of Chinese Silk Fabric

### Scene 5 : What Do The Chinese Managers Do?

Scene 5 presents what Chinese managers do. Based on the interviewees' description of what they do in their everyday work routine, five metaphors emerged from their description. These five metaphors were actually used by the interviewees to describe what they do:

1. "To use your heart and thinking" (用心思)

This metaphor means one has to use feelings and thinking in what one does.

2. "To use more saliva than tea" (口水超过茶)  
(Cantonese)

This metaphor, which is a metaphor of Cantonese dialect, means one talks a lot, sometimes too much. The amount of saliva used in talking is more than the amount of tea drunk.

3. "To kick everything in one leg" (一脚踢)  
(Cantonese)

This is also a Cantonese metaphor. It means one person is doing it all (with his one leg).

4. "To watch with your open eyes" (明目觀察)

This metaphor means one has to keep watch of the happenings in the surrounding.

5. "To contribute what you have gained" (知恩望報)

This metaphor is used to emphasize one's thankfulness to what one has gained (from people or society), and should give and return (to people or society).

The following Diagram (Diagram 5) presents a summary of what the six interviewees do in their everyday managerial work. The activities are organized under the five metaphors which help to clarify these expressions.

## To use your heart and thinking

T.S.	T.F.	T.YB.	T.EB	H	C
talk with the workers check with them any problems	to understand the person's personality and temperament	use your experience to judge	talk to the manager	talk to the government officer	talk to the sales people
bridge the new and old generations	help the second generation at the side	plan in your head	go out to talk with friends in the afternoon	speak up in the association meeting	talk to the personal assistant
think of some objectives	help the directors in their work		talk with the staffs to keep touch	talk on the phone	do business on the phone
plan for improvement	think of a way to help the workers take care of their feelings			give public talk	talk with visitors
	slow explain the analyze for them to understand			contact the foreign countries	contact the bank
	let them know that we are concern				cotact the customers
	concern their family problems				call to find out the market
					chit-chat with staffs
To use more saliva than tea	meet with the person-in-charge of each departs.	go out visit dealer	make them feel concern and approable	strategic plan	concern about the staffs problems
people approach me for help.	discuss with the shareholders if there is problem	go talk to customers	take care of them	fight for the government support	pay attention to the interpersonal relationships
talk on the phone	talk to the worker if they are not happy	talk to the supplier	find a chance to explain the situation	think of a business approach	care about their personal and family life
talk to the personnel officer	consult friends on problems	talk on the phone	don't keep things in the heart	cultivate staffs	
try to convince the boss	talk to the personnel officer	interact with staffs			

To kick everything in one leg

T.S.	T.F.	T.YB.	T.EB	H	C
touch on everything	read letters twice a day	sign check	read the mails	read the mails	read letters
any problems arise, I have to take care	delegate letters to staffs	check my account book	arrange jobs to different depts	read the letter drated	sign letters and documents
deal with incoming letter	arrange work	sign receipt and letter	sign checks and documents	help in language translation	review telax
Daily raw material order items	go out to make purchasing order	collect money from customers	make decisions	check account book	send telax
regular meeting	listen to the letter drafted	do sales on the phone	listen to the letter drafted	read monthly report	review financial record
keep in touch with the supplier	prepare for sales meeting		purchase or order materials	visit government agence	delegate tasks
Arrange meeting with boss	supervise the production		talk on the phone	give lecture and training	visit friends
staff meeting			evaluate the product samples		attend meetings in social organizations
handle the machine			deal with gossips		review everyday jobs
work in the lab.			have lunch with friends or customers		mediate conflicts
check the account			handle the finance		give instructions to staff
					have lunch with customers or visitors
					review monthly report
					evaluate account
					negotiate with customers
					collect money from customers

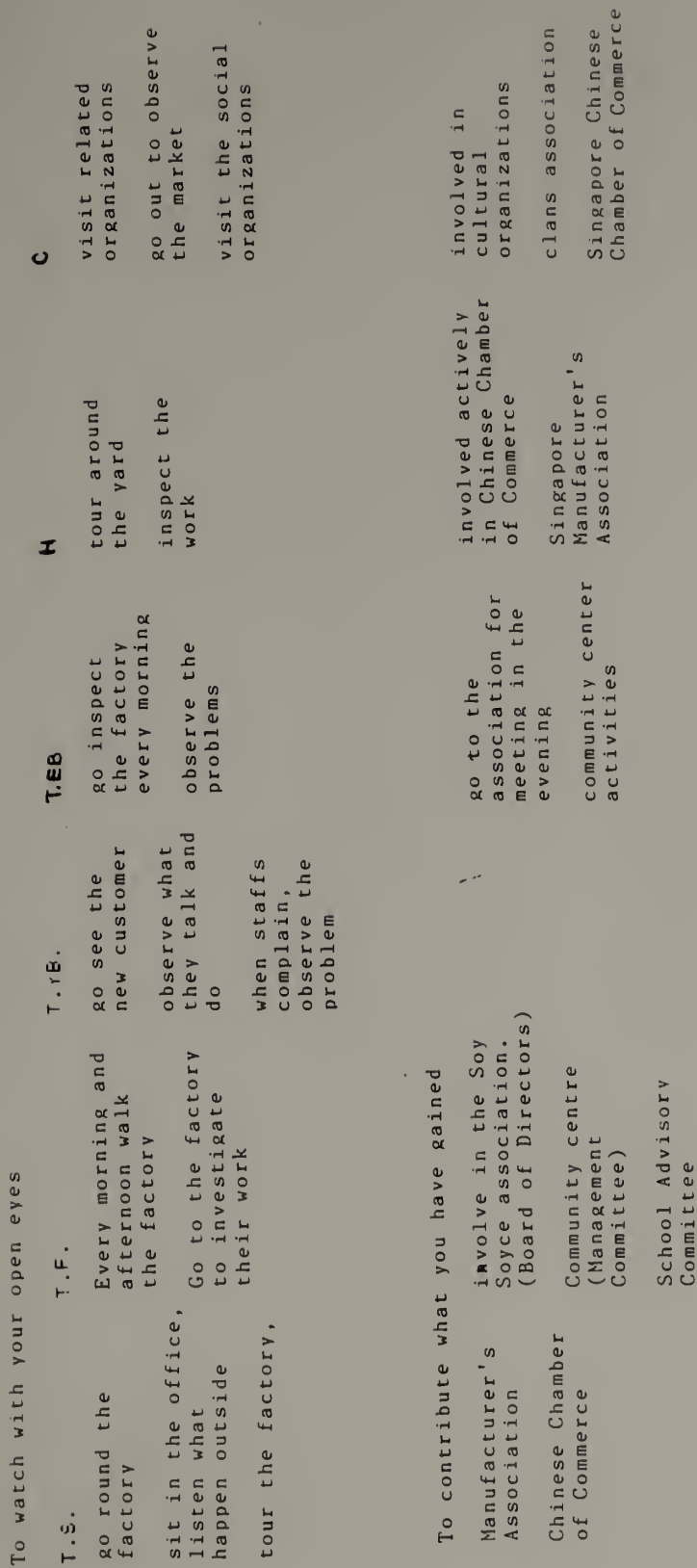


Diagram 4 : Five metaphors on what the Chinese Managers do.



## C H A P T E R VI

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the Chinese conception of "management" with the ultimate goal of exploring a new scope of organizational theory for Chinese management in Asia, particularly in Singapore. More specifically, the purposes of this study were (1) to discover the Chinese manager's perception and definition of management, (2) to describe the way they manage.

Two research questions were asked: (1) How do the Chinese managers (in Singapore) perceive and define "management"? (2) How do they manage? An interpretive paradigm of research and analysis was used as the research approach. Indepth interview served as the primary instrument in the data collection. Six Chinese managers in Singapore, all from local Chinese family organizations, were interviewed. Three of them belonged to the old generation, and three belonged to the young generation. The inclusion of this mixture of generations was an attempt in this study to incorporate

the different perspectives of Chinese management in order to capture the dilemma of the generation gap, and the dilemma of the integration of Western and traditional Chinese management.

The research findings were presented through six stories and five scenes. Six stories were the descriptions of the six interviewees on what they perceive and how they feel about their organizations, their work and Chinese management. The five scenes were the interpretation and analysis of the "stories" presented. Scene 1 focused on the Chinese managers' perception of the characteristics of Chinese management; Scene 2 contrasted the differences between Western management and Chinese management; Scene 3 highlighted the dilemma of the old and young generations and the dilemma in integrating Western and Chinese management. Scene 4 presented four metaphors and a meta-metaphor that capture the conceptions of Chinese management; and Scene 5 presented five metaphors that describe the work of Chinese managers.

Scene 1 and 4 actually answered research question One, and Scene 5 answered research question Two. Scene 2 was an elaboration to the answer of the research question One. Most interviewees tended to compare and

contrast Chinese management with Western management in defining what Chinese management is by defining what it is not. Scene 3 did not actually directly relate to the two research questions. However, the purpose of including the old and young generations in the sample group was to include the two different perspectives of these two groups on Chinese management. The findings showed many contradictions and dilemma in their perspectives of what Chinese management and how it should be. Whether the dilemma was a result of the natural evolution process of Chinese management or a result of the impact of Westernization on the society and organizations is debatable. This study was not able to give a clear answer. More research studies will need to be done before any conclusions can be drawn. The following is a summary and discussion of the research findings.

### **Major Findings - Summary And Discussion**

#### **A. What do the Chinese managers perceive to be the characteristics of Chinese management?**

Scene 1 of Chapter Five presented the characteristics of Chinese management as perceived by the interviewees. There were some variations among the

interviewees, especially between the old and the young generation. The different perspectives of the old and young generations will be discussed later. The central characteristics of Chinese management are distinctive based on the findings, although they are being challenged by the impact of Westernization. The following is a list of the characteristics of traditional Chinese management that have been discussed among the respondents.

1. Chinese management emphasizes on emotion 人情 (Ren Chin).
2. Chinese management is human centered. Managing human relationships is important in management.
3. Trust 信用 (Xin Yong) is the foundation and capital of an organization. It is important to gain trust from other people. To gain trust is to keep one's promises.
4. To trust people, one has to make judgement. A good judgement is based on experiences.
5. When trust is emphasized, contract is not necessary.
6. It is important to listen and observe first before any judgement. Like the Chinese Gong Fu, Chinese value reservation.
7. Chinese are hardworking people. They are not calculative about time.
8. Chinese management is 親力親為 (Chin Li Chin Wuay) The managers are involved in everything.
9. Chinese organization is family centered. All the key personnel are usually family related members.

10. Chinese organization often started with a small size, and maintained as a small or medium-sized operation.
11. There is no organizational chart.
12. There is no clear-cut and formal objectives.
13. Decision making is usually on an ad-hoc basis.
14. Long term planning is seldom made. Planning is usually short-term and not written down.
15. The distance between the top management and workers is small.
16. The successors are usually the sons of the shareholders.
17. There is a power core in the center of Chinese organization, and this power core lies with the boss(es), who are usually family.
18. Power struggle, as a result of conflicts, is a significant phenomena in Chinese organization, particularly when there is succession issue and multiple core families.

#### Discussion

Chinese management is a human centered management. It emphasizes human relationship. People are the center of concern. Chinese emphasize a lot on emotion 人情 (Ren Chin) and trust 信用 (Xin Yong). Any management decisions have to take emotion 人情 (Ren Chin) into consideration. Ren Chin means that one has to consider the human emotion and human relationship in management. In relation to emotion, obligation plays an important role in the Chinese way of management. The workers feel

management, the top manager plays a crucial role. He is "the leader", "the soul of the organization". He has to be "the right person". If the right person does it right, the organization will be very effective; if there is not a right person, the organization will eventually fail.

Thus, Chinese management is characterized by two circles: an inner circle that is the power core controlled by the boss or a small number of people, usually family members; and an outer circle of employees, who are either relatives, friends or outsiders. These are the two basic distinct hierarchies in a Chinese organization. Besides the bosses, there is no ranking among the workers. The way the two hierarchies are tied together is based on obligation. Moreover, the concept of the order of old and young, senior and junior influence the hierarchical relationships. The older or senior person has to take care of the younger and junior person; the younger and junior person in turn has to respect the older and senior person.

With these characteristics of Chinese management, the power struggle manifests in its unique way. The human-centeredness and family centeredness of Chinese



management creates a more human-centered management style. By the same token, it also creates more power struggle and uncertainty. Power struggle manifests differently at two different levels, a vertical level and a horizontal level. A vertical level power struggle is between the two generations, between the old and the young, between the more educated and the less-educated people. A horizontal power struggle is among the shareholders, or among the young generation. There are several factors that contribute to the power struggle: the number of shareholders and the successors, and the degree of involvement of the family members. Power struggle is a result of conflicts. Conflict is preferred to be avoided or not confronted.

Succession tends to create a lot of conflicts in Chinese organization. As Chinese organization is family-oriented, the old generation prefers to pass it onto the son. If there is more than one shareholder, the succession becomes complicated; if there is no son or the son is not interested in succeeding in the business, the organization will face difficulty in continuation. Therefore the succession plan becomes a critical factor in the survival and development of the organization.

There are different ways in dealing with conflicts and power struggle. If the conflicts happen in the outer circle, among the staff and workers, the managers usually are the mediators in helping to resolve the conflicts. If the conflicts happen in the inner circle, among the shareholders or successors, mutual understanding and acceptance is important. The old generation tends to have a better understanding and working relationship than the young generation.

The other characteristic of Chinese organization that has significant impact on Chinese management is the size of the organization. Most of the Chinese organizations started with small capital, small expense, and small number of people. The size of a Chinese organization is usually kept small. It is easy to control and manage. It allows for closer interpersonal relationships, shorter decision-making chain and faster decision making. If the organization is small, the manager has to be involved in everything. He has to know everything in the organization. Many times, he has to do business personally, talk to workers personally and visit customers personally.

It seems that the human centeredness, family centeredness, the power core and the size of Chinese

organization are the key characteristics of Chinese management (Diagram 6). They mutually reinforce each other and form a chain that holds Chinese management in its present form.

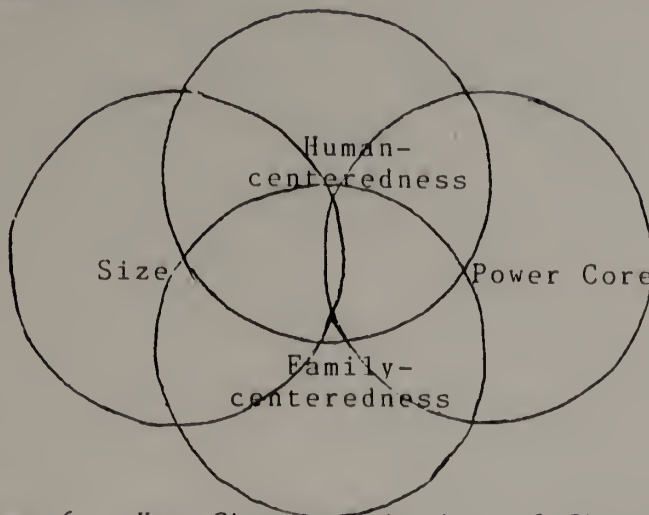


Diagram 6 : Key Characteristics of Chinese Management

It is speculated by the researcher that if one of these characteristic is loosened, all the others will not be retained. Westernization may have a great impact on traditional Chinese management but if these four characteristics are still maintained, then Chinese management will evolve and reform. It will not die or be lost.

#### **B. What do the Chinese managers perceive as not Chinese management?**

In addition to Scene 1, Scene 2 focused on contrasting Western management and Chinese management.

Many interviewees defined what is not Chinese management by contrasting with Western management. The following diagram (Diagram 7) shows the contrast.

Western Management	Chinese Management
Announce to public about their achievement - open door management.	Do not like to announce to the public about their achievement - close door management.
Emphasize change and improvement.	Remain static and hope it lasts forever.
Use rules and norms to guide one's behaviors	Use feelings and emotion to guide one's behaviors
Judge on individual's performance.	Depend on interpersonal relationships.
Have a clear organizational chart.	Have no organizational chart.
Work for objectives.	Work for obligation.
Emphasize long-term planning.	Has no long range or written planning.
Hire expertise to work.	Primarily family and friends. Expertist not not the central feature in hiring.
Select good customers	Customers are all good
Promotion based on performance	Promotion based on experience
Do not intervene in work.	Often intervene in work.
Care about the results.	Care about the way it is done.
Have clear accountability.	Have vague accountability.

Decisions based on facts.  
instincts.

Decision-making chain is  
long.

The gap between top  
management and employees  
is big.

The communication between  
the top management and  
the workers is indirect.

Have regular formal meeting.

Have recording of the  
meetings.

Contract is used for  
business.

Emphasize on marketing  
concepts.

Have high expense.

Have a fixed working time.

Decisions based on

Decision-making chain is  
short, usually two  
levels.

The gap between top  
management and employees  
is small.

The communication  
between the top  
management and the  
workers is direct and  
face-to-face.

Meeting is usually on  
ad-hoc basis.

Have no recording of the  
meetings.

Contract is seldom used.  
Trust and relationship  
is more important.

Do not use marketing  
concepts.

Have low expense

Have a flexible working  
time.

Diagram 7: Comparison of Western and Chinese Management

## Discussion

As Singapore is a small and developing country, and is going through a process of westernization and modernization; it is inevitable for Singaporeans to be exposed to Western management concepts. The findings

have shown that most of the managers, especially the younger generation, are aware of the differences between Western and Chinese management. The dilemma is in their struggle to integrate both. They recognized that there is no answer as to which one is good and which one is bad. They recognized the social trend in westernization away from reliance on family friends and personal relationships. With a stronger emphasis on English education in the society, it is inevitable that the future generation will be more exposed to the Western management concepts. However at this transitional stage, nobody knows how to make a choice in their present management approach and managers are uncertain about what is going to happen in the future.

As mentioned by many interviewees, it is not only a management problem but a social problem. Organization and management are reflections of the society that is human-made. People build organizations according to their values, and societies are composed of institutions and organizations that reflect the dominant values within their culture. The dilemma of integrating the Western and the traditional is a dilemma of the country, as well as many other developing countries. The choice of the Western or



traditional has become a cultural as well as a political choice.

**C. The dilemma of the old and new generation; and the dilemma of integrating Western and traditional Chinese management.**

Scene 3 elaborated the dilemma between the old and new generation and the dilemma of integrating Western and traditional Chinese management. Diagram 8 is a summary of the dialectical views of the old and new generation.

Old generation	Young generation
I have experience	-----I have Education
I intervene to help	-----I hire competence and expert effective result
Boss's responsibility	-----Individual's responsibility
Conform to the majority	---Maximize individual's talents and potentials
My decision depends on the situation	----My decision is not absolute. It can be overridden anytime by the boss
The job is more important	--The designation is important
I have to take care of the workers.	----I have to set my own objectives and achieve them.
The young generation like some comprehensive management method.	--The old generation work for obligation.

The young generation like--The old generation remain  
speedy way of management. static.

We should change ----- We should change every  
gradually. year.

The young generation is ---The old generation don't let  
going to have many me prove it. They don't let  
difficulties if they me test out my concepts.  
apply Western management  
theory.

We have to take care of ---In the process of change, we  
the old workers in the have to tell the English  
process of change educated population that we  
are a modern company.

The problem is the ----- My problem is the level above  
different education me.  
mentality.

Diagram 8: Dilemma between the old and young generation

Diagram 9 shows an internal dialogue of a young manager, his dilemma and contradictions in trying to integrate both Western and Chinese management. On the one hand, he complained about traditional Chinese management and expressed the desire to westernize; On the other hand, he still practiced the traditional Chinese management concepts and values. Although the contradictions may not necessarily create, it revealed the struggle to integrate Western and Chinese management.

On the one hand,  
he said:

On the other hand,  
he said:

They play a lot in emotion. I still play a lot of  
feelings

Everything is relationship, No matter what, he is  
and emotion which I think my cousin. If I don't  
is not good. support him, who is going  
to support him.

(The emphasis on emotion is not good in traditional  
Chinese management, but I still value a lot on  
feelings.)

They work for obligation. I feel obligated to my  
They keep the old workers father. I am the eldest  
who have bad performance son. I have the obligation  
because of obligation. to work for this company.

(The boss-worker relationship is based on obligation  
which is not good, but I feel obligated to my father.)

I see myself as an I am obligated to this  
'employee', not the son of company. I feel obligated  
the Managing Director. to my father.

(I don't want to be seen as the son of the Managing  
Director, but the real reason why I stay in the company  
is because of my father.)

We should judge based on  
performance.

The key personnel should  
still remain our family  
concern.

(Performance should be the criteria in work, but family  
relationship should still be the criteria for key  
personnel.)

We should be open-door, to  
be more public like the  
Americans.

We should remain Chinese  
in terms of key personnel  
so that we can protect our  
know-how.

(We should be open to the public, but we need to keep  
to ourselves to protect our self-interest)

I want to be dispensible  
in this organization.

I am the right person to  
this company.

(I want to be dispensible, but I am the right person  
for the company, thus I am indispsible.)

The boss is always the  
He is the power core.  
My decision can be over-  
written by the boss  
anytime. I feel very  
frustrated.

If I can control these  
three managers. I am the  
center core. I can  
manipulate the company to  
make it effective and  
successful.

(The boss has the power to control the subordinates, I  
feel frustrated when he overrides my decision, but if I  
were the boss, I will control my subordinates.)

Diagram 9: Dilemma in intergrating Western and Chinese  
Management.

#### Discussion

As Scene 2 presented the difference between  
Western and Chinese management as perceived by the  
Chinese managers, Scene 3 presented a specific case to  
elaborate the dilemma of integrating Western and  
Chinese management. Such a dilemma was manifested in  
the different perspectives held by the two generations.  
The older one being more traditional and the younger  
one being more westernized, on how the organization  
should be managed. The dilemma was not only manifested  
between the two generations, but also within the young

generation, who on one hand claimed himself as still very Chinese in terms of his values, and on the other, wanted to adopt Western management concepts in the way he worked.

As admitted by the interviewees, there were a lot of contradictions in the present management. The pull and push forces between the old and young generation, the Western or traditional management approaches, created a lot of dichotomy and tensions within the organization.

#### **D. The metaphors and a meta-metaphor of Chinese management.**

In Scene 4, four metaphors and a meta-metaphor were presented to elaborate the conceptions of Chinese management of the Chinese managers (Diagram 4).

The four metaphors are "Organization as Power Manipulation", "Organization as a Machine", "Organization as a Family" and "Organization as a Person" (Diagram 10).

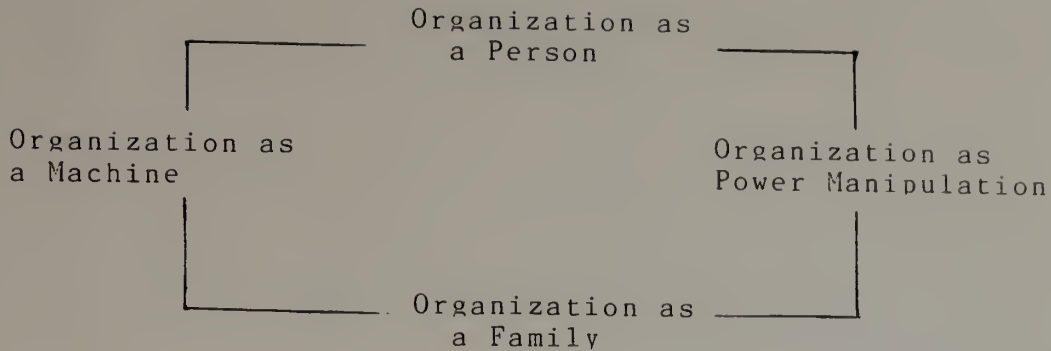


Diagram 10: Metaphors of Organization

These four metaphors encompass the key characteristics of Chinese management as presented in Diagram 10. Chinese organizations can be captured in four different metaphorical conceptions. One highlights the power dynamics of Chinese organizations; one captures the energy flow of a machine and its coordination; one emphasizes the strong flavor of family and its relations in Chinese organizations; and the last one portrays an image of organization as a person and its essence of human centeredness. These four metaphors provides different light on Chinese organizations. They tell different versions of the story of Chinese organizations.

Knowing the metaphors may not be enough since the reality is often an interplay among metaphors. A meta-metaphor that captures the network and interconnection of metaphors provides another insight



of the same phenomena. "A piece of Chinese silk fabric" abstracted from the meaning of the Chinese characters 組織 (Zu Zhi), organization, and 管理 (Kuan Li), management, is able to encompass the various metaphors and put them into a different light. It capitulates the inseparable co-existing realities that are woven together. It also portrays the meanings of logic, orderliness, and fitness and the feelings of knitting with love and care in Chinese management.

#### **E. What do the Chinese managers do?**

Scene 5 aimed to present what the Chinese managers do in their everyday activities. Five metaphors as described by the interviewees captured what they do as managers. They are: "To use your heart and thinking", "to use more saliva than tea", "to kick everything in one leg", "to watch with your open eyes", and "to contribute what you have gained". The following is an abstract of the findings in Scene 5.

##### **1. "To use your heart and thinking"**

This metaphor describes how a Chinese manager should use his heart and thinking to:

- a. make people feel concerned
- b. take care of people and their feelings
- c. concern about the staff's problems
- d. pay attention to the interpersonal relationships

- e. care about the workers' personal and family life
- f. understand a person's personality and temperament
- g. help people, including the directors, the young generation, the workers in their work
- h. think of different ways to help people
- i. explain and analyze the situations for people to understand
- j. cultivate staff
- k. do strategic thinking
- l. think of business approach to different customers
- m. use experience to judge
- n. fight for government support

2. "To use more saliva than tea"

This metaphor describes how a Chinese manager talks alot in his daily work. He has to:

- a. talk to the managers
- b. talk to the staff
- c. talk to the government officer
- d. talk to the salespeople
- e. talk to the personal assistant
- f. talk to the visitors
- g. talk to the workers
- h. talk to the customers
- i. talk to the supplier
- j. talk to the bank
- k. talk to the public

Most of the managers stay in the office in the morning and go out to visit or attend meetings in the afternoon. The purpose of the talking is mainly three-fold: one is related to work and problems in work, one is to keep in touch and show concern to staff and workers, and one is to gain information and resources. Two interviewee described that 80% of the

time in work is spent on interaction; only 20% of the time is spent on individual thinking and writing.

### 3. "To kick everything in one leg"

This metaphor describes how a Chinese manager has to be involved in everything. He has to:

- a. handle any problem that arises
- b. review everyday jobs
- c. deal with incoming letters
- d. read letters
- e. delegate letters to staff
- f. listen to the letter drafted
- g. sign receipts and letters
- h. attend meeting
- i. arrange meeting
- j. prepare for meetings
- k. order raw material
- l. make purchase order
- m. handle the machine
- n. work in the lab
- o. check the account
- p. evaluate the financial statement
- q. supervise production
- r. do sales on the phone
- s. evaluate product sample
- t. collect money from customers
- u. deal with gossip
- v. mediate conflicts
- w. give instructions to staff
- x. have lunch with friends or customers
- y. visit government agencies and social organizations
- z. give lectures and training

Chinese managers have to touch on everything from reading letters, attend meetings, visiting people, supervising work, doing sales, handling account, to dealing with gossip and conflicts. These are little logistic chores in everyday work life that they have to

attend to, placing emphasis on building and maintaining relationships.

4. "To watch with your open eyes"

This metaphor describes that how a Chinese manager has to watch and observe what is happening around the organization. He has to:

- a. tour around the factory everyday once if not twice a day
- b. sit inside the office and listen to what is happening outside
- c. go to the factory to investigate the workers' work
- d. observe the situation when there is complaint
- e. observe problems
- f. inspect production
- g. visit new customers and observe what they talk about
- h. go out and observe the market

All the Chinese managers tour around the factory every morning, and sometimes in the afternoon, to inspect the work process. They also go out to visit customers, suppliers, government agencies and social organizations. Their work involved a lot of physical movement instead of sitting in the office. Walking around listening and observing what is happening and helping out are important aspects of the work of a Chinese manager.

5. "To contribute what you have gained"

This metaphor describes that how a Chinese manager has to be involved in social organizations. He is usually involved in two types of social organizations: one is commercial and business association, and the other is cultural and educational. They usually chair or sit on a few committees of different organizations. Some are more active than others.

#### Discussion

The five metaphors capture the everyday managerial work of Chinese managers. They are different from the description of the literature on the role and function of a manager, which in the old scientific management model was to plan, coordinate, delegate, and make decisions. Managers in Chinese organizations are involved in doing big and little chores. Although Chinese managers are often perceived as the father-figure of the organization, their work actually involve a lot of stereotypical mother's jobs, including taking care of people, housekeeping, running errands, and maintaining an interpersonal and social network.

## Discussion On The Research Findings In Relation to The Literature

### **A. Research findings on Chinese management as affirmed by the literature**

The key elements of Chinese management presented in the Literature Review (Chapter III) are similar to those found in this study. Both describe Chinese management in Singapore as small-scale family concerns. Even the larger Chinese companies are still run in the same way as small companies. They remain in family control.

Rational legal authority is not adopted. It is very common to find in most privately held companies registered locally that the shareholders are all members of the family including uncles, cousins and nephews. Most businesses belong to, and are managed by, partnerships among groups of relatives.

There is no formal planning framework in the average Chinese company. The planning of events is a day-to-day matter and is usually kept in the hands of the proprietor. There is no recognizable planning systems in a formal sense and no budgeting.



The organizational structure is also ill-defined. The functions of a business normally acknowledged as distinct by Westerner, such as marketing, finance, personnel, etc., are not evident in Chinese firms. As a result of these characteristics there is a lack of objective performance measurement and the control of people's behavior is dependent on the relations in a personal sense with the proprietor.

In most of the Chinese organizations, centralization of power is maintained because of close association between ownership and control and the Chinese value of respect and compliance toward the father-figure. Delegation of authority and managerial functions come from the proprietor. The importance of 信用 (Xin Yong) in Chinese organization can never be overemphasized. Without Xin Yong, there can be no business at all since all business on credit is only carried out among those who are familiar with each other. Since Xin Yong forms the basis of verbal contract, there is no need for a formal legal contract. With good trust 信用 (Xin Yong), a Chinese manager normally enjoys good personal relationships. One important aspect of personal relationships is the affection 感情 (Kan Chin). Related to 感情 (Kan

Chin) , Chinese has a strong sense of obligation. It is manifested most clearly in filial piety and extended to relatives and friends. Employment of relatives is also a sense of obligation, sometimes despite their qualification to the job. Personal relationship is critical within the organization. Outside the organization, personal social contacts are also important sources of business information. Almost every personal social contact provides an opportunity for seeking business information.

In short, the research findings in this study, to a great extent, have reaffirmed the literature on Chinese management in Singapore. However, this literature has talked little about the impact of westernization on Chinese management, and the dilemma faced by many present Chinese organizations in integrating Western management concepts into Chinese management. Although the literature has described the predominant characteristics of Chinese management in Singapore in ways similar to this study's findings, the existing literature has not synthesized the findings and put them into a broader perspective.

This study, to some extent, makes a further attempt to understand and explore the Chinese

conception of management by defining various metaphors that describe what the Chinese managers conceptualize Chinese management is and their role as managers. Such an effort provides a new way of understanding the Chinese management, and opens a new realm for further development of Chinese organizational theory.

**B. Research findings on 'what the Chinese managers do?' in comparison to Mintzberg's (1973) findings.**

"What do managers do?" This is a simple question nevertheless a difficult one to answer. This study found out what Chinese managers do through five metaphors that they used in describing their work. They are "To use your heart and thinking", "To use saliva more than tea", "To kick everything in one leg", "To watch with your open eyes" and "To contribute what you have gained".

To some extent, this study found some similar characteristics of managerial work described by Mintzberg (1973). However there are variations in the degree of emphasis of the different aspects of managerial work in this study compared to Mintzberg's study.

Mintzberg (1973) analyzed the managers' work in four dimensions through direct observation and by having managers record their activities on diary pads. He drew some conclusions, based on his study of the chief executives of five middle- to large-sized organizations, on the characteristics of managerial work and the managers' working roles.

In his findings, he described that "the managers' activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation".

"My own study of chief executives found no break in the pace of activity during office hours. The mail (average of 36 pieces per day), telephone call (average of 5 per day), and meetings (average of 8) accounted for almost every minute from the moment these men entered their offices in the morning until they departed in the evenings. A true break seldom occurred. Coffee was taken during meetings, and lunchtime was almost always devoted to formal or informal meetings. When free time appeared, ever-present subordinates quickly usurped it. If these managers wished to have a change of pace, they had two means at their disposal- the observational tour and the light discussions that generally preceded scheduled meetings. But these were not regularly scheduled breaks, and they were seldom totally unrelated to the issue at hand - managing the organization" (Mintzberg, 1973:30).

Chinese managers in this study, also shared the same characteristics. The metaphor of "kicking everything in one leg" connotes the meanings and feelings of brevity, variety and fragmentation of manager's work.

Mintzberg (1973) found that the managers use five basic media: the mail (documented communication), the telephone (purely verbal), the unscheduled meeting (informal face-to-face), the scheduled meeting (formal face-to-face), and the tour (visual). The significant finding is that managers demonstrate very strong attraction to the verbal media. Based on five weeks of observation of chief executives' work, he found their distribution of hours were: scheduled meetings 59%; unscheduled meetings 10%, tours 3%, desk work 22%; and telephone calls 6%. The distribution of numbers of activities were scheduled meetings 19%; unscheduled meetings 19%; tours 5%; desk work 33%; and telephone calls 24%.

This study did not provide concrete statistical data as Mintzberg did in his study. However, based on the description of the managers, it was found that the Chinese managers spend less time in scheduled meetings than in unscheduled meetings. There are usually no regular meetings in the Chinese organizations. They spend less time in desk work and in the office than in tours. Most Chinese managers described that they spend only 20% of the time in their office. Most of the time, they tour around the organization or visit people

outside the organizations. They usually tour once in the morning and once again in the afternoon. Visiting is usually scheduled in the afternoon. Telephone calls seem to vary among the organizations depending on the nature of the business. Some business requires more telephone calls in business dealings than the others, for example, more telephone calls in wood industry and accomodities business, but less in foodstuffs and garments. It also depends on the role of the managers. Some are much more involved in business dealings and some less.

The major difference in Mintzberg's findings and these findings in terms of the distribution of time and activities in managerial work is that Mintzberg's study found that the managers spend more hours and number of activities in scheduled meeting and desk work. They are more attracted to the verbal media; whereas this study found that the Chinese managers spend more time in tour and unscheduled meetings. They usually do these two tasks simultaneously. They tour around to talk informally with people, and to watch the happenings surrounding them. Visual is more emphasized for Chinese managers as they described that one part of their jobs is "to watch with open eyes". The Chinese managers also



have a social role to play as they described as "contributed what you have gained", which was not evident at all in Mintzberg's findings. Participating in educational, social, cultural, commercial activities is a major part of the Chinese managers' work for both old and young generations.

Mintzberg (1973) also defined ten managers working roles: the interpersonal roles, which include the roles of figurehead, leader, liaison; the informational roles, which include the role of monitor, disseminator, spokesman; and the decisional roles which include the roles of entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. Diagram 11 elaborates the ten roles (Mintzberg, 1973:92).

<u>Role</u>	<u>Description</u>
<u>Interpersonal</u>	
Figurehead	Symbolic head; obliged to perform a number of routine duties of a legal or social nature
Leader	Responsible for the motivation and activation of subordinates; responsible for staff training, and associated duties
Liaison	Maintains self-developed network of outside contacts and informers who provide favors and information

Informational

- Monitor Seeks and receives wide variety of special information (much of it current) to develop thorough understanding of organization and environment; emerges as nerve center of internal and external information of the organization
- Disseminator Transmits information received from outsiders or from other subordinates to members of the organization; some information factual, some involving interpretation and integration of diverse value positions of organizational influencers.
- Spokesman Transmits information to outsiders on organization's plans, policies, actions, results, etc.; serves as expert on organization's industry

Decisional

- Entrepreneur Searches organization and its environment for opportunities and initiates "improvement projects" to bring about change; supervises design of certain projects as well
- Disturbance Handler Responsible for corrective action when organization faces important, unexpected disturbances
- Resource Allocator Responsible for the allocation of organizational resources of all kinds- in effect the making or approval of all significant organizational decisions
- Negotiator Responsible for representing the organization at major negotiations

Diagram 11 : Ten Manager's Roles (Mintzberg, 1973)

By looking at the ten roles titles without the description, there is little similarity between Mintzberg's findings and this research findings in terms of the managers' roles. The Chinese managers did not call themselves a figurehead, a liaison, a monitor, a disseminator, a disturbance handler, or a resource allocator, although they did define themselves as a leader, a spokesman, an entrepreneur and a negotiator. As described in Chapter Five, Scene 4, the Chinese managers described their roles as the "parent" of the children, the "the soul" of a person, the "right person" to manipulate the situations, and the "engine" of a machine.

As a "parent", the manager's roles are the "helper", "care provider", "nurture giver", "cultivator", "listener", and "guidance". As a "soul", the manager's roles are the "motivator", "ideology inspirator", and "acculturator". As a "right person", the managers' roles are the "power manipulator", "decision maker", "planner" and "task delegator". As an "engine" of a machine, the managers' roles are the "energizer", "leader", and "cooperator". Diagram 12 shows the difference between the two research findings.

<u>Interpersonal.</u>	<u>As a "Parent"</u>
Figurehead	Care provider
Leader	Nurture giver
Liaison	Cultivator
	Listener
	Guidance
<u>Informational</u>	
Monitor	<u>As a "Soul"</u>
Disseminator	Motivator
Spokesman	Ideology inspirator
	Acculturator
<u>Decisional.</u>	
Entrepreneur	<u>As a "Right Person"</u>
Disturbance Handler	Power Manipulator
Resource Allocator	Decision Maker
Negotiator	Planner
	Task Delegator
	<u>As an "Engine"</u>
	Energizer
	Leader
	Cooperator

Diagram 12: Comparison of Mintzberg's Findings and this  
research Findings on the Manager's roles

It is found that there are similarities and differences between Mintzberg's study and this study. The differences may be due to the different sample group, American vs Chinese; the different size of organization selected in the study, medium- to large

organizations vs small family-owned organizations; different research methods, observation vs interview; and the different cultural values impact on management practice, the American culture vs the Chinese culture. More research studies can be done analyzing the different managerial work in different cultures.

**C. Research findings on the dilemma of change in relation to Hofstede's (1984) framework.**

The impact of social-cultural change on Chinese organization was evident in the research findings. The traditional Chinese management is facing the inevitable trend of Westernization. As a result, many Chinese organizations are trying to integrate Western and Chinese management, which causes contradictions and dilemmas in the management. To understand the dilemma of change will help to resolve the problems and to open a new realm for further development of Chinese management.

No culture is good or bad. All cultures have their own strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand the underlying value assumptions of the culture based on its own context. This presents the complex context in which Chinese managers feel the need

to make choices regarding traditional and Western practices.

As presented in the Literature Review (p.46), Hofstede's (1984) provides a four-dimensional framework for understanding the cultural systems of different societies. They are individualism versus collectivism, large versus small power distance, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity. Although there are critiques on the generalizability of Hofstede's paradigm, particularly his dimension on masculinity versus femininity, (Selmer, 1986; Westwood and Everett, 1986), Hofstede's framework does provide a larger socio-cultural context for considering possible changes in Chinese management. It can be used to explain, to some extent, the research findings in this study. The following are some of the researcher's speculations using Hofstede's framework.

In dimension One, individualism versus collectivism, traditional Chinese management is embedded in a collectivist society in which individuals can expect their relatives, clan, or other in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Moving towards a more individualistic society in which a loosely knit social framework is preferred and

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interpersonal commitment and responsibility is perceived to be less, traditional Chinese management style in Singapore is faced with a new challenge. More emphasis is now being placed on expertise, reward-performance, individual achievement, and professional relationship as mentioned by some of the respondents. More outsiders are preferred to be hired than the relatives and friends. As expressed by one of the old generation interviewee: "The traditional Chinese management will not be ideal in the future. Singapore is progressing, we have to progress. We should emphasize more on task".

The shift from a collectivist to a more individualistic value dimension has implications for the future development of Chinese management. First of all, the employer-employee relationship will be changed. As presented by Hofstede (1984:87):

"In individualist cultures, the relationship between the employee and employer is a business relationship based on the assumption of mutual advantage: it can be called a calculative relationship. In a more collectivist cultures, the relationship between the employee and employer has a moral component. It is felt to be similar to the relationship of a child with its extended family where there are mutual traditional obligations: on the side of the employer, protection of the employee, almost regardless of the latter's performance; on the side of the employee, loyalty toward the employer".

Secondly, the priority in organization will be shifted from the "relationship" to the "task".

"In individualist cultures, it is felt to be 'right' that in business all people should be treated alike: friendships and enmities should not affect business deals. Business considerations should have precedence over personal friendships and preferences. Business behavior, to use a sociological term, should be universalist.

In collectivist cultures, even in business, people think in terms of 'we' and 'they'. Relations, friends, tribesmen get better deals than strangers and this is the way it should be. It is normal and right. The sociological term for such behavior is particularist. Considerations of personal trust and relationships should have precedence over business considerations. Whereas in individualist cultures, it is felt that the task should have priority over the relationships; in collectivist cultures, it is felt that the relationships should have priority over the task" (Hofstede, 1984:88).

In dimension Two, large versus small power distance, Chinese management is characterised with a strong power core that constitutes only the proprietors. Positioned in a large power distance social cultural system, the hierarchical order of an Chinese organization is well accepted and needs no further justification. This characteristic of Chinese management is challenged by Western perspectives, in which people strive for power equalization and demand justification for power inequalities. The characteristic of a strong power core in Chinese organization is less challenged in Singapore because

the larger culture still maintains a large power distance mentality or set of values.

The centralization of power will still be maintained because of a close relation between ownership and control. Moreover, the Chinese ethic of respect and compliance toward the father-figure has still remained strong. As in the case of T.S. who has been exposed to Western education and wanted to Westernize, still emphasized his obligation to his father and the organization.

"Filial piety, to the Chinese, is considered as the first and the ultimate of all virtues. A child is expected to learn early in his/her life that s/he must be respectful and obedient toward his/her parents. No other culture in history has placed such a stress upon filial piety as has the Chinese" (Hsu, 1984).

Boss is still perceived as the father-figure in the organization, and has power by rights with no need of justification.

"In cultures higher on the Power Distance scale, parent-child relationships are different. There is a norm of filial piety, loyalty, respect, and devotion to parents is considered a supreme virtue. This leads to an expectation of obedience by children, at least formally, and obedience which is supposed to last for life, even the children have grown up.....In an organization, it is normal that superior-subordinate relationships are modelled after the same pattern of subordinate dependence.... A good superior is expected to behave like a good father (or mother) towards subordinates: paternalism is the norm" (Hofstede:90).

In dimension Three, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, traditional Chinese management operates on less need for the uncertainty avoidance value dimension. It is evident in the data that the traditional Chinese management does not emphasize formal rules, written plan, organizational objectives and structure, no fixed time for meeting, or fixed criteria for performance evaluation.

"In organizations, the emotional need for rules means a preference for formalization of structure, standardization of procedures, and 'ritualization' of behavior. Other factors being equal, we can expect more formalization, standardization and ritualization in strong Uncertainty Avoidance cultures than in Weak Uncertainty Avoidance cultures.....Ritualization of behavior refers to the extent to which it is important to speak the proper words, dress in the proper way, perform the proper acts in given situations. In organizations, it is visible in when and how meetings are conducted, memos are written, plans and budgets are specified, forms and reports are issued, experts are nominated. Meetings, memos, reports, experts often serve ritual ends as much as (or even more than) decision-making ends....." (Hofstede, 1984:93).

However, with the impact brought into the organization by the young generation, there is a stronger need for some kind of structure, standardization, and ritualization. Many Chinese organizations have started implementing monthly meetings, writing reports, planning sales strategies and budgets, and setting recruitment criteria. In other

words, it is evident in the data that there is a small shift from a less Uncertainty Avoidance to a more Uncertainty Avoidance scale in the Chinese organizations.

In dimension Four, masculinity versus femininity, traditional Chinese management is operated on a femininity value dimension, where certain aspects in relationships such as modesty, caring for the weak, and the quality of life is preferred.

"Masculinity is associated with a performance society and Femininity with a welfare society..... In a masculine society, competitiveness between people is seen as a good thing: the strong should win. In a feminine society, solidarity between people is seen as a good thing: the strong should help the weak and social justice is an important value. A masculine society believes in equity: rewards according to performance. A feminine society believes in equality: reward according to need" (Hofstede, 1984:96).

Similar to the other value dimensions, the value of femininity in Chinese organizations has likewise been challenged. Performance and career is more emphasized. Competition among the young generation is evident in T.S. case. One has to prove to win. With the impact of the cultural change in the society, the aspect of "the old taking care of the young" and "the senior taking care of the junior" in the traditional Chinese management will be difficult to maintain.

The future direction of traditional Chinese management can be speculated based upon where the West and East are positioned within this framework. Traditional Chinese management will certainly be challenged by the shift from a more Collectivist to a more Individualistic society. It will also be challenged, to a less extent, by a shift of a less Uncertainty Avoidance to a more Uncertainty Avoidance, a more Feminine to a more Masculine society, although the strong Power Distance is likely to still be maintained. The implication of this analysis is that the traditional Chinese management is faced with the challenge of cultural change in the larger society as well as within the organization. However, the researcher believes that although there is an impact of Westernization on Chinese organizations, the Chinese management can never be totally Westernized as long as the larger culture stays relatively unchanged or changes little along one or two dimensions of the social-cultural system. How Chinese management is going to evolve depends on how it copes with the changing value dimensions in the larger culture as well as within business organizations.



### Implications Of The Research Findings

#### **A. Implications for Managers in Chinese organizations.**

The results of this research indicate that the Chinese have their own management style which is distinct from the Western management style. The basic value assumptions underlying Chinese management are human-centeredness and family-centeredness. Relationships underlie the dynamics of Chinese management. Chinese management has its own strengths and weaknesses that have been recognized by many Chinese managers. The unique characteristic is that of "humanity" which is built upon in the traditional Chinese management style. The biggest weakness is its unpredictability, vagueness and subjectivity.

The attempt to integrate Western management concepts into Chinese management, although such changes could have some positive outcomes, often encounters many problems. The main problems are the acceptability of the old generation and old workers and the jeopardy of the advantages of the traditional Chinese management, such as the close human relationships.

As expressed by many Chinese managers, it is a difficult choice. Singapore has been progressing and has been moving toward westernization. It is an

inevitable trend for Chinese organizations to westernize for survival. Many Chinese organizations have failed because of their failure to westernize.

Many Chinese organizations have struggled to westernize by sending their successors abroad for Western education, and hoping that the successors can bring back the Western concepts and technology. However, a more fundamental question is not a what and how but why.

Chinese managers, especially the younger generation, have to start thinking about the following questions:

1. Do Chinese organizations have to be westernized? Why do Western principles and methods seem attractive?
2. Is Westernization the only way for survival?
3. What is/are the other alternative(s)?

As mentioned by many interviewees and in the literature, human-centeredness and family orientation need to remain if traditional Chinese management is to survive. Chinese managers have to first recognize these as values of Chinese management. By adopting some Western management or other methods that do not contradict or jeopardize these values, Chinese management will still maintain its own central

characteristics. Learning from the West can enhance the development of Chinese management, but such development can never move too far.

Chinese managers may not appreciate the importance and enormous impact of decisions to adopt Western practices and models. What seems like a small change on the surface or in daily behavior may actually change values and elements central to traditional Chinese ways of living and working. Change may be necessary given the rapidly changing world around and in Singapore. However, if central traditional values are known, appreciated and able to be verbalized, then changes can be adopted in greater awareness of their long term implications. Changes will perhaps be less likely to be adopted simply because they are new or are evaluated well in the Western literature.

#### **B. Implications for Management Educators.**

Similarly in Management Education, Western management textbooks are predominantly used. These textbooks define and explain what management is in a Western context, where different norms and values prevail. Management is culturally bound. Predominant Western defined management concepts are not necessarily applicable in every culture, especially in Asian

countries where basic assumptions and values differ greatly. The dilemmas presented in these research findings have reflected the mismatch of many Western concepts to a Chinese organization. Some people, although they have realized the mismatch, have not developed alternative solutions.

The research findings suggest that the study of local Chinese management style is critical for local management education. Students have to be educated and informed about Chinese management concepts as well as Western management concept. To recognize the differences between one's own culture and the cultures of others is the first step for future development of Chinese management. Adopting blindly the Western management concepts is a pitfall in losing one's own cultural values and traditions.

Management educators need to develop more cultural awareness and a critical mind in questioning the underlying values of the imported management concepts. Moreover, more local Chinese management books should be written for publication and used in educational programs. This study is a contribution to the development of a local Chinese management book for the education of local Chinese management.

### **C. Implications for Organization Theorists**

Hofstede (1984) stated that: "Management deals with a reality that is man-made. People build organizations according to their values, and societies are composed of institutions and organizations that reflect the dominant values within their culture. Organization theorist are slowly realizing that their theories are much less universal than they once assumed: theories also reflect the culture of the society in which they were developed" (Hofstede, 1984:81).

It is important for Western organizational theorists to be aware of the existence of other cultures, and to recognize one's own cultural assumptions underlying the theories and their limitations. In other words, organizational theorists have to recognize that their theories are not universally applicable. They should not generalize their theories, which are based on their cultural values, into other cultures. Eastern cultures need to support the development of their own concepts and theories and to be cautious in their consideration of imported models. The East could in this way value and support the development of its culture.

### **D. Implications for Cross-Cultural Studies.**

Not only are management theories less universal than once assumed, the research methodologies that are predominantly functionalist with a strong emphasis on quantitative and objectivity are less relevant and

applicable than they assumed. Redding (1980) stated that "social settings are defined and must be analysed in terms of the participant's epistemology".

Chinese believe that everything should be viewed only in its own context. Universal principles are discarded in favour of highly situational analysis. Such concepts are alien to the scientific tradition of fixed boundary conditions, clearly defined variables, nonsubjective assessment, and rational consistency within a closed system. Therefore classical quantitative research with hypothesis testing and presumed cause-effect relations could very well be seen as irrelevant in a Chinese cultural context.

The findings of this research is a result of its unique epistemology and methodology. The phenomena can never be read the same way with a different lense, or with an outsider's pair of eyes, or perhaps by these eyes at a different time or by different eyes at the same time. It suggests that in any cross-cultural study, the researchers have to pay critical attention on their own cultural lenses. Putting on a pair of sunglasses and asking: "Why the person's face is dark?" is not only asking an irrelevant question, but one that



leads to answers which have nothing to do with the actual situation.

#### **E. Implications for Future Research.**

This is an explorative study. The research findings open many doors for future research. The following are some suggestions:

- a. Comparative studies among Chinese in Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and China could be conducted to find out the similarities and differences among the Chinese cultures. It should not be taken for granted that all Chinese cultures among Asian countries are the same;
- b. Comparative studies between Japanese management and Chinese management could also be conducted to find out their similarities and differences. Much has been written about Japanese management and this could easily be taken to be the model for all Eastern countries. More culture-specific research could help prevent this tendency to treat all Eastern cultures as the same.
- c. Future research studies could be conducted to further investigate the research findings in this study, such as the four different metaphorical conceptions, and the dilemma of integrating Western and Chinese management. For example, a participant

observation could be conducted to find out how the two generations deal with the social impact of Westernization on the organizations; or an ethographic study could be conducted to find out the multiple perspectives (the old and the young's) of management within a same organization.

d. This research is managerially biased because only the top managers were interviewed. Future research studies could be conducted to understand the workers' perspectives of management, and to contrast it with that of the managers.

e. Family plays a critical role in Chinese organization. More research studies could be done on the role of family in organization, or the relationships between Chinese family and Chinese organization.

### **Limitations Of The Study**

There are certain limitations in this research study:

Firstly there is the subjectivity of the researcher. Although this plays a critical role in penetrating into the depth of the subject studied, this also brings some implicit beliefs and value judgements into the research findings. The researcher's familiarity with various

aspects of Chinese society provides an invaluable background for such an academic inquiry. However such familiarity may tend to produce biases and to possibly impede the insights of the study.

Secondly there is the problem of language translation of interviews, which were mostly conducted in Mandarin or Chinese dialects. The translation, in this particular study, involved a double filtering process; a filtering of Chinese-English translation where words and concepts do not transfer readily and a filtering of the translator's interpretation.

Thirdly there is the concern of generalizability.

Although this is not a concern for an interpretive study, it is an inherent limitation of such an approach. The findings of this study cannot be generalized and applied to other countries such as China, Taiwan and Hong Kong nor can the findings be assumed to reflect the views of other Chinese managers in Singapore. They can only serve as references for further research on Chinese management, in Singapore and other Asian countries.

Fourthly, due to the small sample size, the study focused only on local Chinese family business organization. Other types of organizations such as

foreign and government, were excluded. Educational and cultural organizations were not included as they were usually affiliated to a government agency or ministry. Therefore, the results of the study only reflected the sample group of Chinese family business.

Lastly, the study is inevitably managerially biased as the sample group constituted only of the top managers of Chinese organizations. In other words, the findings cannot be used to suggest the Chinese supervisors' and workers' perspectives of "management". Similar studies should be conducted on supervisors and workers in the future to compare and contrast with the findings in this study.

### **Conclusions**

This research is only a beginning. It provides an understanding and analysis of Chinese management in Singapore. The results show the uniqueness and richness of Chinese management and its potentiality for development of a humanistic management model. Singapore is a unique country that has a strong blend of Eastern and Western cultures. If Singaporeans are more aware of the advantages of their marginal culture, and value it highly, they can create a unique management style of

their own. However the foundation is always on one's own traditional culture. Imitating or adopting from the West and ignoring or discarding one's own tradition will only lead to a sense of disorientation loss and potentially to changes in major cultural values. The researcher hopes that these research findings can stimulate and increase the awareness of the importance of one's own cultural tradition and inspire Chinese managers to consider Western organization models in the context of traditional values and beliefs.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **A Note from the Researcher**

There are many things that I wanted to say but was unable to incorporate in the chapters. This note is meant to say what I did not say in the content of this study.

The first thing that I want to say is that this dissertation appears to be very organized, consistent and clear. However, it is not the truth. In doing a qualitative research study, there is always a strong element of ambiguity, vagueness, uncertainty and inconsistency. I did not know what I wanted to say till I said it, and felt amazed. Yes, I had some purposes and questions in mind when I started the research. However they were not clear and affirmed until the time when I finished the research. In other words, purpose does not necessarily come first and clear. Sometimes purpose comes after actions, and is often redefined to explain and justify the actions. My point is that there is much more ambiguity, vagueness, uncertainty and inconsistency than you can read in this writing. The linear presentation in this writing could mislead your understanding of the reality of qualitative research.

Secondly, since there are a lot of uncertainties and ambiguities in qualitative research, it often causes a lot of discomfort and insecurity for the researcher. But after all, isn't this true with life? Believe me, I was nervous. I was not sure what I would or could find out. I did not even know what questions to ask and how to ask. But persevered. I lived with uncertainty and sometimes embarrassment. "Why did I ask that stupid question?" "Why didn't I ask him to clarify that?" "Why didn't I hear what he said?" "Oh. He caught me. I am stuck." "Oh. I forgot to ask him again." "How am I going to absorb all these information?" "How am I going to make sense?" "Am I too subjective?" "Am I biased?" "What to do now?" "This is too overwhelming!" I constantly struggled with all these questions. However, I learned how to manage and live with it. First of all, the journal was very helpful. It helped me to memorize things. It helped me to capture a bigger



picture by adding up all the little puzzles that I wrote down; it also helped me to ventilate my feelings. Secondly, I learned how to "escape" for a short while by stopping to think about anything that was related to the research. It sounds silly, but it is the truth, at least for me. A qualitative research study is using 'self' as a means to discover 'the others'. It is natural to feel happy, excited, enlightened, frustrated, angry, embarrassed or vulnerable.

There are three factors that I think are important for people who want to do research like this. First of all, you have to manage your momentum, your physical and mental energy. Secondly, you have to manage your respondents' momentum' their sense of curiosity and interest, and their schedules. Thirdly, you have to live with the uncertainty and overwhelming feelings. Let it be there. Be persistent and do things one step at a time. But, I think most of all, you have to love and believe what you are doing and enjoy doing it.

Thirdly, I want to say something about the interpretation and analysis. The transcription and translation was a very tedious process. However, it was a very critical stage. I called it "building rapport with your 'data'". I had to interact constantly with the 'data', to understand what it was trying to reflect and reveal. I attribute this skill to my choreographing experience. I had different pieces of image in mind while interacting with the 'data'. These images helped to keep the 'data' alive and three-dimensional. However, when I came to the actual writing, I still had to flatten it to a great extent. Language is only two-dimensional.

Lastly, I want to reveal the difficulty of staying in an interpretive approach. Interpretive approach has the strongest strength to reflect the world as it is, to uncover the reality as it is. However, it is difficult sometimes to be purely interpretive when the reality discovered is against your own beliefs and values. Being a Singaporean Chinese woman, I have a deep concern for my country and people. I strongly object to imperialism in the world. I strongly object "West" equals to the "Best". When the dilemma of "traditional management" and "Western management" was revealed, and the tendency to "Westernize" was found inevitable, I couldn't stay "cool". I started to be

"radical". However, I don't think I allowed my radicalness to bias the findings. It took me extra effort to be aware of my subjective value judgement.

This is only a beginning of the journey. I enjoy what I have accomplished and will continue to do more. I will certainly use this study as part of the teaching material for undergraduate courses in Singapore, share it with my colleagues, develop a few articles for local journals, and hope to develop more research inquiry in the near future.

## Appendix B

### Sample

#### Sample group in Preliminary Study

Code Name	Age Group	Sex	Organization
1. L.	30-49	M	Government
2. H.	30-49	M	Japanese
3. C.	30-49	M	Local Family
4. TA.	30-49	M	Government
5. TE.	30-49	M	Japanese
6. T.F.	50-70	M	Local Family
7. H.	50-70	M	Local Family
8. T.EB.	50-70	M	Local Family

#### Sample group in the Actual Research Study

Code Name	Age Group	Sex	Organization (Local Family Business)
1. T.S.	30-49	M	Foodstuffs
2. T.F.	50-70	M	Foodstuffs
3. T. YB.	30-49	M	Garment
4. T. EB.	50-70	M	Garment
5. H.	50-70	M	Timber
6. C.	30-49	M	Commodities

## Appendix C

## Theme Categories

Interviewees Themes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. small size	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
2. family business			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Parental style					✓	✓		✓
4. Interpersonal relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. conflicts and resolution			✓	✓	✓			
6. Renqing 人情	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
7. Xingyong 仪用	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. flexibility	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
9. Day to day planning; intuition decision making			✓	✓	✓		✓	
10. Luck and Opportunity			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
11. Comparison to the U.S. & Japan	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
12. Social and political context		✓	✓					✓
13. Personal history related to organization			✓			✓		✓
14. "Traditional" and "modern" management		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
15. Metaphors	✓					✓		✓

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

1. Would you share with me your personal experience in Chinese management in your organization?
2. What do you think are the characteristics of "Chinese organization"?
3. What is your perception of your role in your organization?
4. Would you describe your everyday activities in your organization?
5. Would you share with me some stories that happened in your organization?
6. Would you describe the people and work in your organization?
7. Please use a metaphor to describe your organization. or Please draw a picture of the image of your organization.

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